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Video

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MARCH 1987

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Grades*

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Effect VCRs**
*Flirting With
Chip Thrills*

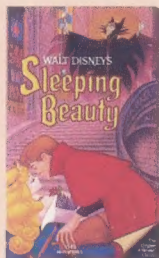
**George Romero On
The Colorized 'Dead'**

BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEOTESTS
NEC Digital-Effect VCR • Olympus 8mm
Camcorder • Pioneer LaserDisc Player
Marantz VHS VCR



FOR VCR OWNERS WHO KNOW A TAKE ANY THREE MOVIES,

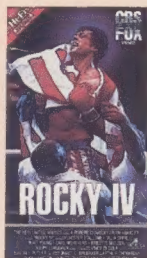
PICK FROM OVER 200 MOVIES ON THESE TWO PAGES.



SLEEPING BEAUTY
5437022



DELTA FORCE
3383012



ROCKY IV
3570042



JAGGED EDGE
1813052

TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER	TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER	TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER	TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER
ROCKY	0563172	BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID	0517302	WARGAMES	0828002	THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI	1606062
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE	3305062	CHARLOTTE'S WEB	2095022	GREMLINS	6082082	TO CATCH A THIEF	2050052
THE HOWLING	0527202	FORT APACHE	5526042	IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	3256052	ENEMY MINE	3584082
THE BIG CHILL	1527022	THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY	0582222	DUMBO	5251052	MOONRAKER	0677102
RAGING BULL	0500132	GUYS AND DOLLS	3533002	EDDIE MURPHY—DELIRIOUS	2055182	JANE FONDA'S NEW WORKOUT	5112042
PURPLE RAIN	6048012	STARMAN	1723042			WUTHERING HEIGHTS	3126032
THE CARE BEARS MOVIE	7110022	PALE RIDER	6097012			A VIEW TO A KILL	0899052
TRUE GRIT	2028122	FRIDAY THE 13TH	2042062			THE GREAT ESCAPE	0638002
SUPERMAN	0013132	FUNNY GIRL	1511002			DR. STRANGELOVE	1521082
CITY LIGHTS	0689022	TWICE IN A LIFETIME	4857062			A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2	3382022
OLD YELLER	5289012	REDS	2029032			CRUISING	3500252
A CHORUS LINE	3193012	THE BLACK STALLION	0504012			THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD	1653082
THE PARENT TRAP	5288022	AGAINST ALL ODDS	1633032			SMOOTH TALK	4858052
A SOLDIER'S STORY	1733282	TERMS OF ENDEARMENT	2014182			ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN	6070022
JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT CHALLENGE	5260042	RED RIVER	7507032			SILVERADO	1810082
TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.	7225042	MISTER ROBERTS	6095032			WEST SIDE STORY	0505342
MARY POPPINS	5276062	CHARIOTS OF FIRE	6014012			DEATH WISH	2027132
PLACES IN THE HEART	0978082	PRIZZI'S HONOR	4802022			THE COTTON CLUB	3100032
EATING RAOUL	0793012	THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	0910092			STING—BRING ON THE NIGHT	5116002
BODY DOUBLE	1713062	THE CARE BEARS MOVIE II	1862052			PORKY'S	0775112
AGNES OF GOD	1812062	BLADE RUNNER	3104092			LOVE STORY	2040082
SESAME STREET PRESENTS: FOLLOW THAT BIRD	6117072	GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER	1819092			POLICE ACADEMY	6049002
		ARTHUR	6024092			COCOON	3553052



PRETTY IN PINK
4224022



IRON EAGLE
3588042

A lot of savvy VCR owners have been finding out how good our deal is. And how good our movies are. Just keep reading and you'll see for yourself four reasons why the CBS Video Club has the best deal around on the movies you want to own. And you can get in on that deal right here and now.



3547042

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WITH MEMBERSHIP

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HALLOWEEN	3250012	THE THING (ORIGINAL)	5505092
STOP MAKING SENSE	1759192	ARSENIC AND OLD LACE	0735102
AIRPLANE	2033232	CAT BALLOU	1545002
TEEN WOLF	4104072	AMERICAN GIGOLO	2030002
STAR TREK III—THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK	2016162	THE SWORD IN THE STONE	5409062
NORTH TO ALASKA	7310002	MAD MAX: BEYOND THUNDERDOME	6089012
THE SEVEN SAMURAI	3108052	ROBIN HOOD	5299092
THE KARATE KID	1710092	GHOSTBUSTERS	1742012
ALL ABOUT EVE	0044082	"10"	0011072
HELLO DOLLY	0609052	"10"	0002322
FOOTLOOSE	2019052	THE GODFATHER—PART II	0018002
THE RUSSAINS ARE COMING	0948052	SPLASH	5304022
YANKEE DOODLE DANDY	0574052	WITNESS	4114052
RETURN OF THE DRAGON	0818022	THE LONGEST DAY	0577032



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
2026062



SPIES LIKE US
6116082



JEWEL OF THE NILE
3571032



DOWN AND OUT
IN BEVERLY HILLS
5426052



MURPHY'S ROMANCE
1853062



AFTER HOURS
6167062

THE WAY WE WERE	1529002	WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION	0717122
PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE	6098002	THE GODFATHER	0008022
KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN	3187092	AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON	7140062
ON GOLDEN POND	0523162	LA CAGE AUX FOLLES	0512012
GOONIES	6081092	CADDYSHACK	6023002
NOTORIOUS	0567132	SOUTH PACIFIC	3506112
NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN	6042072	AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN	2021192
THE WOMAN IN RED	7105092		

TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER	TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER
PRIVATE BENJAMIN	6018072	REBECCA	0664072
DAS BOOT	1520092	OKLAHOMA!	0054052
THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE	4000022	BLUE HAWAII	0673142
ANNIE	1516052	THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN	0923122
STRIPES	1513162	THE PINK PANTHER	0561012
CARNAL KNOWLEDGE	3122072	SUNSET BOULEVARD	2003032
THE AFRICAN QUEEN	0511022		
GANDHI	1533042		
CASABLANCA	0507162		
TOOTSIE	1509042		
MAD MAX	7109052		
THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL	0576042		
THE FALCON AND THE SNOWMAN	4808062		
BEVERLY HILLS COP	2053102		
FLASHDANCE	2018142		
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN	0534212		
M*A*S*H	0055122		
SUMMER RENTAL	4173032		
FANNY AND ALEXANDER	3112092		
48 HOURS	2022182		
A SOLDIER'S STORY	1733282		
THE EMERALD FOREST	3145002		
DIRTY HARRY	6017082		



GUNG HO
4225012

TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER	TITLE	SELECTION NUMBER
COUNTRY	5341072		
THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY	2092052		
VALANCE	6028052		
THE ROAD WARRIOR	1603092		
RICHARD PRYOR—LIVE ON THE SUNSET STRIP	6084062		
THE KILLING FIELDS	0690212		
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE	2017152		
TRADING PLACES	0042422		
THE FRENCH CONNECTION	6096022		
NATIONAL LAMPOON'S EUROPEAN VACATION	0925022		
REVENGE OF THE NEERDS	5501032		
CITIZEN KANE	1514072		
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA	5502022		
KING KONG (ORIGINAL)	2020282		
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER	2074072		
GREASE	6088022		
LOST IN AMERICA	0858032		
THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING	0508072		
THE MALTESE FALCON	0583052		
THE ALAMO	7104002		
MR. MOM	5504002		
SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON	1741022		
A PASSAGE TO INDIA	2000142		
MOHICAN DEAREST			

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About every four weeks (up to 13 times a year), we'll send you our *CBS Video Club Magazine*, reviewing our Director's Selection plus a wide choice of alternate movies. Including recent hits like *Pretty in Pink* and *Return of the Jedi*. Classics like *Casablanca* and *The African Queen*. And family favorites like *The Sound of Music* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

In addition, up to four times a year you may receive offers of special selections, usually at a discount off regular club prices, for a total of up to 17 buying opportunities.

If you want the Director's Selection, don't do a thing. It will arrive automatically. If you prefer an alternate or none at all, just let us know by mailing the enclosed card by the date

Advance Selection

**SAVE UP TO \$60 MORE—
HAVE LESS TO BUY LATER!**

Order a fourth movie now for only \$19.95 (that's up to \$60 savings!)—and your membership obligation is immediately reduced (you then need buy only 4 more, instead of 5). See coupon at right.

specified. (If you ever receive a tape before having had a full two weeks to decide, send it back at our expense.) You can also call us toll free with any questions or service requests.

Join today and we'll send your first three movies for just \$3.30 each along with more details on how the Club works.

If you're not satisfied, return everything within 10 days for a full, prompt refund—no further obligation.

For faster service, use your credit card to order and call toll free **1-800-CBS-4804** (in Indiana, call 1-800-742-1200). Or mail the coupon.

CBS VIDEO CLUB

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ONLY \$3.30 EACH.**

That's only \$9.90 for all 3!

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Please check how paying:

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☐ Charge my introductory movies and future Club purchases to:

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Account # _____

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Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

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Features

The \$600 Solution

It's certainly possible to break the bank on top-notch video gear, but you can also get a good quality TV and VCR duo for under \$600.

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Let's Get Digital

The addition of digital technology to VCRs is opening new worlds of special effects and image quality, with more magic to come. A look at what's available now.

By Roderick Woodcock 42

1987 Blank Tape Tests Part II: Beta

Our Technical Editor gives the lowdown on the current crop of Beta tapes: 54 brands and grades analyzed, graphed, and charted in detail.

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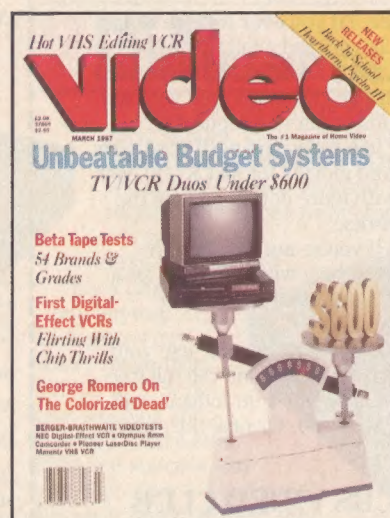
NEC DX-2000U VCR with Digital Effects

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**HUNTED LIKE AN ANIMAL,
STALKED BY MANIACS, SHE'S**

Fair Game



**AVAILABLE ON
VIDEOCASSETTE
MARCH 25, 1987.**

SOUTHERN FILMS INTERNATIONAL presents 'FAIR GAME'
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ENTERTAINMENT

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Channel One

Setting Digital Priorities

This month's feature, "Let's Get Digital," is a state-of-the-chip report on how digital technology is transforming the familiar VCR. It describes the cluster of digitally-enhanced decks already on shelves, and some of the many more to which consumers can look forward. "Audio Input" examines how digital processing is being applied to audio recordings. Digital enhancement is an important step in the VCR's evolution, and we'll be following it closely. But it's not too early to ask a few questions about the direction in which digital applications are heading.

VCR makers first applied binary power to regulate LCD displays and some programming functions, uses now taken for granted. For a time, the digital focus shifted to monitor/receivers. Toshiba, for example, used digital technology to stitch together the two "interlaced" segments of a broadcast image for a better, clearer picture. Then, last year, VCRs reentered the arena. A lineup of new digital features appeared, with manufacturers offering slightly different combinations in their models.

The new enhancements range from frivolous to important. "Gee-whiz" features, like picture-in-picture and picture swap, dominate. RCA included the digital gimmick of the year, a control that turns the picture into a mosaic of fuzzy rectangles, leaving users to figure out its possible value. The serious side of digital video is represented by NEC's efforts to reduce visual noise and, to a lesser degree, by Toshiba's and RCA's unusually clear special effects.

We hope more firms follow their lead. Why? Because, for serious videophiles, the flashiest special effect is a high-quality picture—an image dazzling enough to make viewers forget they're gazing at a pane of flickering glass. The truly digital VCRs able to deliver such magic by storing pictures and sounds in digital form are several years away. Until they arrive, digitally-enhanced VCRs will have to do: they hold the best hope of better quality. And that's where VCR-makers should be concentrating their digital energies.

It may be that the focus on novel, but inessential, features is a stage through which digital VCR technology must pass, but it would be heartening to see companies pay more attention to raising picture quality before adding glitz. PIP, swap, strobe, posterization, and the like are great features to have on command, but not if they're at the expense of improvements that would otherwise have been made in the basic image we spend most of our viewing time watching.

Brighter, truer colors, non-interlaced images, higher resolution, busted ghosts, fewer dropouts, and crisper edges are the kind of special effects digitally-aided VCRs should be offering first. With this as a foundation, the multi-image/multi-speed effects will look even better, and give us more value for our digital dollars.

—The Editors

video

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**The first VCR that
makes a bad
tape good.**



In this imperfect world, some videocassette recordings look worse than others. That's why NEC invented the new DX-2000U. It's the world's first VCR with Digital Noise Reduction—a computerized system that actually improves the picture.

On the left is a dramatization of a noisy videocassette. (Noise can arise from repeated playing, off-air recording,

copying, etc.) You can see snow, grain, and glitches. On the right is the effect of the same tape, as it would be played on NEC's DX-2000U. The snow has melted. The fuzz has fled. And the glitches are gone. Digital Noise Reduction not only improves the picture on bad tapes, it helps even well-recorded tapes look their best. So if you want to see the cleanest

picture from any VHS cassette, see your NEC dealer. He's got good news for bad tapes: the DX-2000U with Digital Noise Reduction.

NEC

We bring high technology home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: (312) 860-9500.

NEC Home Electronics (U.S.A.), Inc., 1255 Michael Drive, Wood Dale, IL 60191

Fast Forward

Late-Breaking News

Colorization Scorecard

It was once said of slapstick comedians like The Three Stooges that nobody liked them except the public. The same may hold true for colorization. Despite critical roastings, VCR owners are buying and renting tapes of colorized black & white classics in numbers the film studios call encouraging. The colorized *It's a Wonderful Life* racked up more than 70,000 sales at \$19.95 a cassette, though it seems to be in a league by itself. Other strong colorized titles include a Rin Tin Tin tape by Monterey Home Video that outsold an earlier black & white version by 40 percent, and Hal Roach Studios' *Topper* and *The Music Box* with Laurel & Hardy.

Year Of The Camcorder

Camcorders should continue their galloping popularity this year with an amazing 33.3 percent increase in sales over 1986, according to a survey of video equipment makers by *TV Digest*, a trade newsletter that forecast the leap forward at 71.6 percent. Full-size VHS models will maintain their dominance with 45 percent of all camcorder sales, predicted the manufacturers, while Compact VHS camcorders will close the gap with 40 percent, and 8mm models will trail with 15 percent. They also foresaw steady, possibly declining prices for VCRs, which is good news for consumers, if not for themselves.

The First Fiber Optic LCD TV?

Save a spot on your wall for what its inventors claim will be the long-awaited breakthrough in flat-screen TVs. Tru-Lyte Systems in Pennsylvania says it will have a 36-inch set ready to hang on a hook by the end of the decade. Tru-Lyte president Michael Reidinger says the set will use thousands of fiber optic strands, each ending in a liquid crystal, to create an LCD image far sharper than today's CRT pictures. The prototype is due this summer.

Beta Jitters

Beta not cry, beta not pout...Santa Claus came to town this year for Beta owners. Blank tapes in the declining format were suddenly back in demand over the Christmas season, catching some tape makers by surprise. TDK, in fact, culled Beta tape purchases from eligibility for a consumer sweepstakes for fear it would run out of the cassettes. TDK advertising manager Lou Abramowitz speculated that fears that "Beta may not be available much longer" caused the surge. But tape makers say there's no need to hoard, and our own blank Beta tape tests, elsewhere in this issue, show there's plenty to go around.

Britain On A Disc

The British Broadcasting Company may have created the ultimate videodisc. Its 900th anniversary edition of the

venerable *Domesday Book*, costing \$3.75 million to produce, squeezes a mind-boggling 250,000 pages of text, 50,000 photographs, and 24,000 maps into two twelve-inch discs. The discs use a new format, LV-ROM, that combines a video waveform with CD-ROM data where the sound would normally go. Users can instantly see pictures of and statistics about virtually any locale in Britain. The only drawbacks are that the discs cost \$6000 a set and require a special player and computer to use. Likeliest bets are schools and libraries, but you may need a travel agent to find ones that have them.

Once More Unto The Niche

Two decks in one VCR? Sharp and Samsung had their prototypes shot down by film industry opposition. But the idea's too hot to bury. The latest candidate for the product niche is the VCR-2, a dual-well VHS machine Go-Video of Scottsdale, Arizona is seeking to sell through licensed manufacturers. Go-Video chief Richard Lang predicts his VCR-2, which can adapt to 8mm and Beta formats, will soon be "as common as photocopying machines." But he'll have to contend first with the Motion Picture Association of America, which promises a "swift" response likely to include an appeal for a crack-down by Congress. With the MPAA batting so strongly, its hard to imagine we'll be seeing a double-decker soon.

Still Waiting After All These Years

Casio promises to be first off the block this summer with an electronic still camera for consumers that will shoot snapshots on a video floppy disc and play them back either on a TV or an optional color printer. The 2.1-pound camera will probably cost somewhat more than its \$625 price in Japan, and may be the first of many.

Brightness Breakthrough

Look for unusually bright images in Mitsubishi's new 21-inch plus TVs thanks to a new substance added to the cathode ray tube. The company says scandium oxide will boost brightness by 50 percent by quadrupling the usual number of electron beams hitting the inner surface of the screen.

Designer Decks

The trend Quasar started a couple of years ago with its brightly-colored TVs is spreading to VCRs. There will be a handful of tinted decks in coming months, including Panasonic's pink PV-2700.

The Fourth R

Better add "recording" to the reading, writing, and 'rithmetic once considered the building blocks of grade school. More than 70,000 public schools have at least one VCR, according to Quality Education Data, a Denver-based firm. That's 86.1 percent of the country's public schools.

AN EMBRYO OF NEW TERROR

ALIEN PREDATORS

...THERE IS NO PLACE TO HIDE

Here's
a great
opportunity
to rent the
exciting,
action-
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Executive Producers: HELEN SARLUI and EDUARD SARLUI

Music by: CHASE / RUCKER PRODUCTIONS

Co-produced by: MICHAEL SOURAPAS

Produced by: DERAN SARAFIAN and CARLOS AURED

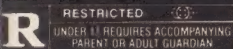
Written and Directed by: DERAN SARAFIAN

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TRANS WORLD ENTERTAINMENT

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What you need to do is take the attached coupon to your nearest Video Retail Dealer and rent "ALIEN PREDATORS". **IMPORTANT!!!** Don't forget to fill in store's name and address. In addition, your dealer's signature as well as receipt for proof of rental is required. "ALIEN PREDATORS" must be rented between April 10 and 20, 1987. Trans World Entertainment must receive coupon and receipt by May 13, 1987. Drawing will be held May 31, 1987. Void where prohibited by law. Employees and family of

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Feedback

Readers Air Their Views

Color Clash

I fail to see the logic behind Peter D. Thompson's so-called "Color Commentary" ("Feedback," Jan. '87). Colorizing a film is like painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa. Even with the advent of color in the '30s, many directors still chose black & white for purely aesthetic reasons. By altering the films, Ted Turner and his clan are violating the aesthetic integrity of the original artists.

Turner claims he owns the films and that, therefore, he has the right to do whatever he wants to them. I'm sure the owners of priceless paintings would never consider altering them, nor do they have the right to do so. Turner and others fail to recognize that film is art. These media-moguls are more concerned with a film's commercial profitability than its artistic value.

James M. Fortier
Mountain View, Calif.

The home video industry's colorization of movies is just a fad. Throughout the '60s and '70s the record industry thought no one would buy a record unless it had the magic word "stereo" on the cover. So it took great older recordings, made by everyone from Arturo Toscanini to Elvis Presley, and issued them in "electronically rechanneled stereo sound."

The processes produced sounds ranging from passable to horrible, never like a true stereo recording. Usually the sound was so distorted you could not restore the original sound by switching to mono. Now, these same recordings are being reissued, restored to their original mono sound. Colorization is not going to go away until viewers become more sophisticated and realize that the phony color images are ugly and fuzzy, and that a properly reproduced black & white movie can be truly beautiful.

Craig Andersen
Baltimore, Md.

Is Copying Profitable?

I concur with your "Deja View" editorial ("Channel One," Dec. '86). The Motion Picture Association of America should consider very seriously the effects its myopic greed may have on its industry's

profits. Most people are not in love with the majority of films produced by the motion picture industry.

Even in a group of first-class movies very few rented tapes warrant the effort it takes to copy them for repeated viewing. Because of low expectations from unfamiliar titles, the consumer is more inclined to rent more movies—including those he wouldn't normally bother with—in the hope of finding one worth copying. If the ability to copy movies for home use increases interest in renting movies, then the industry should encourage rather than seek to block it.

James Stover
Spring Mills, Penn.

Vexed Videophile

I enjoyed Lancelot Braithwaite's "The Year in Gear" (Jan. '87), especially the section on VHS VCRs. I appreciate his expertise and avidly read his "Videotests." But "Videotests" lacks information on the reliability of the gear tested. Having owned several VCRs that failed early and are expensive to maintain, I am especially sensitive to the problem.

My first VCR failed in the first ten days; the second was purchased with a two-year warranty and broke down 25 months later; and my current machine is ten months old and already in the repair shop. It's good to know which VCRs perform best, but how long will they last before they need repairs? Reliability testing should be a part of your "Videotests."

L. Kasarjian
Red Bank, N.J.

Lancelot Braithwaite replies: The only way to test for reliability is to use the machine for a year or more under normal and abnormal conditions and see if it fails. But by that time a review would be hopelessly out of date. You can, however, check the service records of machines made by the major manufacturers. Write to Electronics Industries Assoc., 2001 Eye St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Un-Cut Complaints

One thing that puzzled me about your article "After the Final Cut" (Dec. '86) was the statement by MGM/UA's Peter Anderson about 9 1/2 Weeks. He says

that the completely unexpurgated version was X-rated and would not be released. If it is never to be released, why was it made in the first place? Maybe it was for the private entertainment of the executives at MGM/UA? One of the perks of the job, I imagine.

William Breckon
Hobbs, N.M.

What happened to all those scenes that were to be included in MGM/UA's September video release of 9 1/2 Weeks? When I purchased the tape at \$78.98, I thought I was getting the complete uncut version but, aside from one scene, the film is exactly like the one shown in theaters.

David Clark
Etna, Oh.

In fact, the unexpurgated version of the film was released in Europe.

Take it from a Pro

As a professional videographer, I have been frustrated by the lack of reviews of professional VHS hardware. The video trade magazines concentrate mostly on broadcast equipment and the consumer magazines mainly review hardware intended for the home. This leaves the growing number of pro video users without a source of unbiased articles on the tools of our trade. I hope you will expand "Videotests" to include products such as Panasonic's AG and WV series, and its professional VHS editing deck.

Howard Becker
Hicksville, N.Y.

Our policy is not to cover professional equipment unless, like Panasonic's AG-1950 VHS VCR, it is also available to consumers. See this month's "TV Den" for a hands-on report about the AG-1950.

Surround Sound Found

Why do so many people buy surround sound processors when they can decode surround signals for free? The VIDEO article "Found Sound" (Apr. '85) details the steps required to set up a surround sound system. I followed the article's instructions and now have true surround sound when I watch movies and TV shows on my VCR.

Dean Olson
Santa Clara, Calif.

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Feedback

Cheaper Discs, Please

In the beginning, Pioneer advertised videodiscs as the solution to high-priced software. Videodiscs were \$19.95, or \$24.95 at most, while tapes were \$70. Paramount must have forgotten this rationale for disc ownership when it priced *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* CLV discs at \$40 and tapes at \$30. Sure, it used two discs for the film, but if CBS/Fox can put all 120 minutes of *The Empire Strikes Back* onto one disc by slightly compressing it, Paramount could have gotten the 118 minutes of *Temple of Doom* onto a single \$29.95 disc.

Michael J. Hill
Honolulu, Hi.

Disruptive Instructions

Of all the instructions that come with camcorders and cameras, the manual for Zenith's Character Generator takes the cake. After three days of errors and cussing, I'm still confused by its use of such terms as scroll, zoom, cursor, page, etc. If companies would take the time to simplify the instructions by using common English, it would make learning about camcorders as enjoyable as using them.

Fred Ito
Sacramento, Calif.

Zenith responds: "Zenith's TV & VCR manuals have been recognized for their clarity, and our instruction guides on videotape for VCRs have set new standards for helpfulness to consumers. However, your reader has identified the one product in recent years that, because of its extremely limited distribution, has an operating guide that does not represent the quality of Zenith manuals." Readers with questions about operating the character generator may write to Zenith, Attention: Operating Guide, 1000 Milwaukee Ave., Glenview, Ill. 60025.

Ripping Yarn

After reading about a film called *The Quiet Earth* in your Directory (Jan. '87), I ran out and rented it. I was disappointed, to say the least. While it is an excellent piece of cinema, the film did not live up to your description: "Experiment causes rent in universe that could wipe out human race." I expected a film about my landlord.

Brian Markovitz
Van Nuys, Calif.

Errata

The price for Magnavox's VR8295/97 VHS Video Escort Camcorder that appeared in February's "New Products" should have read \$1895.95. This same model is also available as the Sylvania VCC155.

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*BET value: The measure indicates the fineness of the magnetic particles contained on a tape expressed in units of square acres per pound (m^2/g). The higher the BET value, the finer and more numerous the particles—and the greater the tape's video and audio performance capability.

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The Gazette

EDITED BY IRA ROBBINS

Inside Paul Prudhomme's Louisiana Kitchen

"YOU REALLY HAVE TO GET INTO THE POT WITH THE FOOD."

Characterized on the back cover of his *Louisiana Kitchen* videos as "the Pavarotti of American chefs," Paul Prudhomme is actually quieter and more contemplative, as he revealed in a recent conversation from his country home in Opelousas, Louisiana.

Having seen other cooking videos, Chef Paul "kept them in mind. I didn't want to do a tape where you stand up cutting onions and peeling potatoes—people had seen enough of that. I wanted to explain what happened when you put the ingredients in the pot; why you put them in the sequence you did, and how you

let them cook. It's like with any great dish, you give the same ingredients to two different people and one dish comes out well and the other not so well—the difference is in the cooking method."

The tapes demonstrate Prudhomme's famous blackening method with a special skillet cut in half to focus on the highly heated cooking surface. "That was the most exciting thing about the tapes. I felt I was really communicating how to blacken. That's a dramatic sight!"

Prudhomme uses the videos not only to describe his technique but to convey the proper attitude as well. "You really have to get into the pot with the food—mentally, I mean." He feels that a true sensitivity to the ingredients is what the average cook needs to become a really good cook. "I was raised on a farm where you caught a live chicken and you felt the breast and legs through the feathers to tell whether to fry it, make gumbo with it, bake it, broil it, make barbecue—that's how you figured it out!"

—Matthew Pimm



America's 1st Laser Boutique

For many people, the introduction of lasers to the entertainment world occurred in 1964, when Goldfinger tried to saw James Bond in half with one, but the versatile light has come a long way since. There are now a dizzying array of names, formats, and uses for laser-read video and audio discs: CD-Interactive, which combines audio, video, and computer data; CD-Read Only Memory, which contains computer programming and data; and CD-Video, a CD-sized, compatible video disc. That's in addition to regular CDs and two sizes of videodiscs.

Recognizing the growing popularity of laser-based equipment and programming, a Colorado company called LaserLand is selling franchises for stores that carry only laser-based video and audio hardware and programming. The first outlet opened in Aurora, Colorado last December, and Laserland plans to eventually license original software.

—Ira Robbins

Tips For Fear Phobes

Do you have someone in your life who is perfectly wonderful and normal in every regard except for an uncontrollable passion for disgusting slasher films? Does he/she insist that watching cinematic gore together will make for a better mutual existence? Do you, however, wince at Band-Aid commercials? Here are some hints to help you survive your next video ordeal.

- Watch closely. Very closely. You are looking for wires, seams, faults, and flaws of any type in the special effects. When you find one (and you will), point it out. Your partner will be impressed. I don't know why.

- Always look at the face. No matter what gross, horrible thing is happening to the body, the face will look like a fifth-grade papier-mache project. Why? First, the filmmaker assumes you will look at the gore, not what surrounds it. So, less attention is paid to that which is not being hacked. Second, the face doesn't look real because it isn't real. There are laws about things like that. You can't run around killing people in movies. Just ask John Landis.

- Repeat after me: Red paint. Red paint. Red paint. Red paint. Red paint.

- Insist on retaining custody of the remote control. Even if you don't use it, palm



Jenner (right) on the set of his new video.

LIGHT MY FIRE Bruce Jenner's Video Camp(ing)

What's a person to do after being declared the World's Greatest Athlete? Make videos—what else? At least that's *one* of the pastimes Bruce Jenner's engaged in. Although his gold medals have not made him a major screen star, Jenner's appeared in a slew of sitcoms, directed two TV movies, starred in one feature film, and hosted two video-

cassettes, the latest of which is *The Coleman Guide to Camping* (Twin Tower).

Three years ago, Jenner made his home video debut in *Bruce Jenner's Winning Workout* (Active) which he jokingly refers to as "the Olympic Team's answer to Jane Fonda. It's not geared for Americans training for the decathlon because we figured that was a pretty select little

group," he says with a smile. "Rather, it's just basics, but it's a tough little workout. I mean, I may be smiling in the video, but I'm dying."

Despite offers of super-cop and other action/adventure roles, Jenner has opted out of a serious acting career. "It takes too much dedication and I'm in a position where I can make a buck and still have a lot of time for my family and hobbies." Nevertheless, he gave films a go in 1980's *Can't Stop the Music*. "We should've renamed the film *Can't Sell a Ticket*," jokes Jenner. "We tried to ruin Steve Guttenberg's career in that one, but it didn't work." —Clifford Meth

possession can be a source of great comfort.

- Never close your eyes. You can always imagine far worse than the producer can afford.

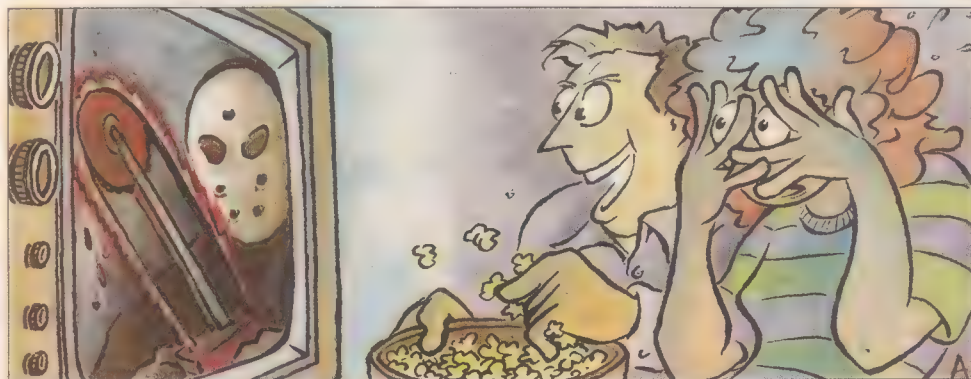
- Insist on choosing the film. You're looking for some-

thing old. The older, the better. You are also looking for the worst acting and direction, the poorest production, and the most preposterous plot. Junkiness will help you remember it's only a movie.

—Linda Vallely

Hot Hits Hit \$100

Despite the growing tendency of video companies to mark down the prices of major titles once they've been in circulation awhile—to encourage consumers to purchase tapes they've already rented—this year's watchword is inflation. CBS/Fox and HBO/Cannon have announced their intentions to price selected blockbuster titles \$10 or \$20 above the current norm of \$80. It's not clear whether renters will find their nightly fees increasing as well, but it's sure not going to send rental rates down.



Daniel Abraham

Ready, Funny, and Abel

Can you vaguely remember something on TV about an organization dedicated to clothing naked animals? The school for professional pan-handlers? No? Idi Amin's wedding in exile at New York's Plaza Hotel? The "spontaneous" 1985 six-person fainting incident on the *Phil Donahue Show*?

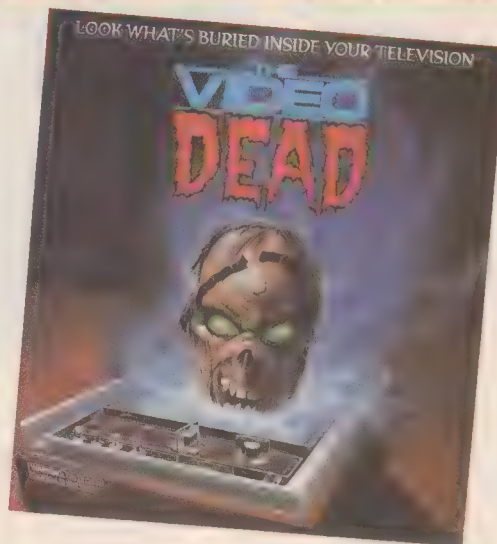
The string-puller behind these outrageous put-ons is author-lecturer-filmmaker-actor Alan Abel, the only man ever favored by *The New York Times* with both an obituary and a retraction thereof, during his lifetime. Abel's hoaxing career started in 1959 after the *Saturday Evening Post* rejected a satirical story about the moral imperative of clothing animals, calling it

"abominable and reprehensible." He wrote Dave Garroway (then host of the *Today Show*) and volunteered to discuss the topic on the air. He enlisted Buck Henry to front for him and the gag was off and running.

In 1971, Abel and his wife made *Is There Sex After Death?*, a crazed pseudo-documentary film which Vestron will release on video.

Abel is now considering video as a commercial arena for his leg-pulling. "I'm interested in spoofing the world and I think the video market is ready." So if you ever hear of a celebrity waiters competition or a how-to-beg-for-a-living video, you'll know who's been hard at work.

—Ira Robbins



If your ultimate TV nightmare involves blown fuses, overpriced repairmen, or eight channels of endless *Gidget* reruns, just imagine what *The Video Dead*, a lurid shocker from Manson International (soon to be a major videotape) will do for your sleeping habits.

TOP 40 SALES AND RENTALS

CASSETTE RENTALS	CASSETTE SALES	VIDEODISC SALES	KIDVID SALES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Cobra</i> (7). 1986. 87m. (R) \$79.95. Warner. <i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i> (1). 1984. 118m. (PG) \$29.95. Paramount. <i>Raw Deal</i> (3). 1986. 90m. (R) \$79.95. HBO/Cannon. <i>Short Circuit</i> (—). 1986. 99m. (PG) \$79.98. CBS/Fox. <i>Poltergeist II: The Other Side</i> (—). 1986. (PG-13) \$79.95. MGM/UA. <i>Down and Out in Beverly Hills</i> (2). 1986. 103m. (R) \$79.95. Touchstone. <i>The Money Pit</i> (4). 1986. 91m. (PG) \$34.98. MCA. <i>SpaceCamp</i> (—). 1986. 115m. (PG) \$79.95. Vestron. <i>The Gods Must Be Crazy</i> (—). 1986. 109m. (PG) \$79.98. Playhouse. <i>Legend</i> (10). 1986. 89m. (PG) \$79.95. MCA. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (2). 1959. 75m. (G) \$29.95. Disney. <i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i> (1). 1984. 118m. (PG) \$29.95. Paramount. <i>Jane Fonda's Low Impact Aerobic Workout</i> (3). 1986. 50m. \$39.95. Karl. <i>White Christmas</i> (4). 1954. 120m. \$19.95. Paramount. <i>Jane Fonda's New Workout</i> (5). 1985. 90m. \$39.95. Karl. <i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i> (6). 1981. 115m. (PG) \$39.95. Paramount. <i>The Sound of Music</i> (8). 1965. 174m. (G) \$29.98. CBS/Fox. <i>Star Trek II—The Wrath of Khan</i> (—). 1982. 113m. (PG) \$19.95. Paramount. <i>Star Trek: The Motion Picture</i> (—). 1980. 145m. (G) \$19.95. Paramount. <i>Star Trek III—The Search for Spock</i> (—). 1984. 105m. (PG) \$19.95. Paramount. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i> (—). 1984. 118m. (PG) LV \$29.95. Paramount. <i>Out of Africa</i> (1). 1986. 161m. (PG) LV \$34.98. MCA. <i>The Jewel of the Nile</i> (5). 1985. 106m. (PG-13) LV \$34.98. CBS/Fox. <i>Back to the Future</i> (2). 1985. 116m. (PG) LV \$34.98. MCA. <i>Legend</i> (—). 1986. 89m. (PG) LV \$34.98. MCA. <i>Police Academy 3: Back in Training</i> (9). 1986. 84m. (PG) LV \$34.98. Warner. <i>Murphy's Romance</i> (8). 1985. 107m. (PG-13) LV, CED \$29.95. RCA/Columbia. <i>Brazil</i> (3). 1985. 131m. (R) LV \$34.98. Embassy. <i>Gung Ho</i> (—). 1986. 111m. (PG-13). LV \$29.95. Paramount. <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (—). 1959. 89m. (G) LV \$34.95. Disney. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1). 1959. 75m. \$29.95. Disney. <i>Pinocchio</i> (2). 1940. 87m. \$29.95. Disney. <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (3). 1951. 75m. \$29.95. Disney. <i>Dumbo</i> (4). 1941. 64m. \$29.95. Disney. <i>The Sword in the Stone</i> (5). 1963. 79m. \$79.98. Disney. <i>Robin Hood</i> (6). 1973. 83m. \$29.95. Disney. <i>Mickey's Christmas Carol</i> (—). 1983. 25m. \$14.95. Disney. <i>Charlotte's Web</i> (—). 1973. 94m. \$14.95. Paramount. <i>Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too</i> (8). 1974. 25m. \$14.95. Disney. <i>Pound Puppies</i> (7). 1985. 37m. \$14.95. Family.

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VCRadio's Digital Debut

Here's an audio tip for Boston-area videophiles: you can use your VCR to receive experimental digital audio broadcasts. Public TV station WGBH, which also operates a radio station, is using the broad band of a spare UHF channel (44) to transmit FM radio programs in digital, rather than the conventional analog form.

Any VCR or monitor/receiver can pick up the broadcast, but you need a decoder (such as Sony's 501ES) to convert the ultra-high fidelity signal for your stereo system. If the FCC approves WGBH's experiment, digital audio may become the wave of radio's future.

Exercise Essentials

According to a survey done for *Entertainment Merchandising* magazine, exercise videos should follow four rules for success: star a big name, run 20-30 minutes, mention the length in the title, and cost over \$20.

VideoVote: Colorization

With all the controversy surrounding computer colorization of black & white films (see "News & Views" for the latest installment), we're curious how VIDEO readers feel about two of the key questions that have been raised:

1. Does colorization of classic black & white movies enhance or detract from their entertainment value?
☐ enhance ☐ detract
2. Do companies have the right to colorize a movie without its director's consent?
☐ yes ☐ no

Clip this box and send to The Gazette, VIDEO Magazine, 460 W. 34 St., New York, N.Y. 10001. Deadline is April 1. We'll announce the results in July. Thanks!



Charles Bronson evens the score in 'Death Wish.'

Winner's Wicked Wishes

"*Death Wish* is probably the most accurate prediction in film history," declares its director, Michael Winner. "The movie simply said that society had reached such an extraordinary point that, if a man took the law into his own hands against muggers and criminals, he would be applauded by the public." Referring to the Goetz case, Winner says, "Of course, it doesn't necessarily mean he's in the right."

The ebullient English *auteur* is "totally against vigilantism. We cannot go around becoming our own judge, jury, and executioner. If that happens, we'll just end up in

a sea of blood. The posse in the wild west normally got the wrong man. It's only in the movies that they got the right person."

Not only was the original *Death Wish* a box office bonanza, it actually received some critical plaudits. The next two installments scored big in theaters and on home video, but observers called them inferior carbon copies. Winner, a former film critic, is unperturbed. "Critics have to look at these films for what they represent to the audience," he explains. "I was brought up on gangster films. In their day, they were written off as cannon fodder. Nowadays, they're looked at in a much different light because they hit a nerve with the paying public."

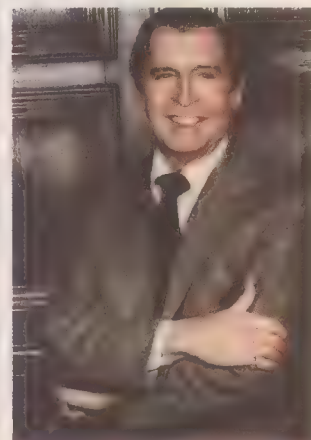
Despite the *Death Wish* films, Winner "would rather be remembered for my early comedies, like *The Jokers* with Oliver Reed, or possibly something like *The Nightcomers* with Marlon Brando." Yet, as he quickly adds, "I don't really mind being known as the *Death Wish* director. Film directors make a lot of money and lead a very glamorous life. It's really a poor subject to moan and groan about in the press."

—Lowell Goldman

Uncle Miltie's Home Screen Berlesque

Predating *Tootsie* by over 35 years, Milton Berle began bringing his outrageous female impersonations to millions of Americans in 1948, via a then-new medium. "I appeared on television for years dressed as a woman," says the 78-year-old comedian. "It was my schtick." Now TV's first drag queen is presenting an all-male cast of female impersonators on a new videocassette, *Milton Berle Invites You to a Night at La Cage*. Uncle Miltie directed and produced the show, which features stars of the Los Angeles night club La Cage. He also portrays gender chameleon Boy George and heckles from the audience.

Heavy metal fans may recall Berle's cameo appear-



ances in two rock videos by the group Ratt. "Maybe all the young kids will know me from watching Ratt." Kids of all ages will get to see more Berle later this year with the release of his old *Texaco Star Theater* TV shows on a video series called *The Best of Berle*.

—Dan Wishnoff

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Social Security Number

Date of Birth

Your Home Address Number and Street

City, Town or Post Office

State

Zip Code

Home Phone ()

Years at Current Address

Previous Home Address

City, Town or Post Office

State

Zip Code

Name of Relative or Close Friend not living with you

Relative's or Friend's Home Phone () and Area Code

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB

Business Name or Employer

Position

Years at Job

Check Here If ☐ Retired ☐ Self-Employed

If Retired, indicate Former Employer

Business Address, Number and Street

City, Town or Post Office

State

Zip Code

Business Phone () and Area Code

PLEASE GIVE US SOME FINANCIAL INFORMATION

You need not include spouse's income, alimony, child support, or maintenance payments paid to you if you are not relying on them to establish creditworthiness.

Yearly Salary \$	Amount of other Yearly Income \$
------------------	----------------------------------

Source(s) of Other Yearly Income	Monthly Rent or Mortgage \$
----------------------------------	-----------------------------

Checking Account Bank Name (Joint or Individual)

Savings Account Bank Name (Joint or Individual)

☐ Money Market Funds Institution

☐ CD/Treasury Bills Institution

FOR FREE ADDITIONAL CARDS

Would you like an additional card for a member of your family or household at no additional cost? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, full name of authorized user

PLEASE SIGN THIS AUTHORIZATION

By signing below I authorize Citibank (South Dakota), N.A. to check my credit history and exchange information about how I handle my account with proper persons and with credit bureaus if I am issued a card. I authorize my employer, my bank, and any other references listed above to release and/or verify information to Citibank (South Dakota), N.A. and its affiliates in order to determine my eligibility for the Citibank credit card. I am aware that information gathered about me is used to determine my eligibility for the credit card account and any renewal or future extension of credit. If I ask, I will be told whether or not consumer reports on me were requested and the names of the credit bureaus with their addresses that provided the reports. If I designate an authorized user to use my card, I understand that account information will also be reported to credit bureaus in the authorized user's name. I certify that I am 18 years of age, or older, and that the information provided is accurate. I understand that if I use the card or authorize its use or do not cancel my account within 30 days after I receive the card, the Citibank Agreement sent to me with the card will be binding on me. Terms are subject to change.

In order to be considered for a Citibank MasterCard or Citibank Visa card you must complete and sign this application. Omission of any of the information requested in this application may be grounds for denial.

X

Applicant's Signature

Date

PLEASE ALLOW 30 DAYS TO PROCESS YOUR APPLICATION
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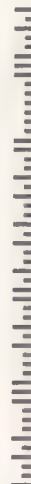


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New Products



Kyocera Finemovie 8 camcorder

Third-Generation Camcorder from Kyocera

Kyocera's latest Finemovie 8 camcorder—its third U.S. model—is its lightest yet, weighing 3.75 pounds with battery and cassette. The KD-1100U's high-resolution solid state image sensor resists image lag, streaking, and burn-in from bright objects. The f/1.6 2.5x1 zoom lens has macro capability, optional autofocus, and auto iris. The unit also features a 2/3-inch electronic viewfinder, LED information displays, and auto white balance.

The Finemovie's recorder has the usual functions, along with picture search, still picture, record and playback at SP, and play-only at LP. Automatic track finding improves the playback quality of tapes made on other 8mm units. An RF converter and direct-line audio and video outputs permit connection to any TV, monitor/receiver, or VCR. An edit switch improves picture detail when dubbing tapes.

Price: \$1500.

For additional information,
circle no. 152 on Reader Service Card.

Low and Mid-Priced VCRs from Sanyo

Sanyo has introduced two new VCRs, the VHR500 and the VHR2700, featuring HQ circuitry, picture search, automatic rewind and playback, and auto power on. The VHR500 is an inexpensive model with 107-channel cable-compatible tuning, 14-day/4-event programming, and a 14-function infrared remote. A rotary programming control simplifies timer recording.

The VHR2700 is a more full-featured model with Dolby noise reduction and an MTS/dbx stereo decoder. It has a 111-channel frequency synthesized tuner, 1-year/8-event programming, and full on-screen display. Both VCRs also feature "quick start" recording for up to

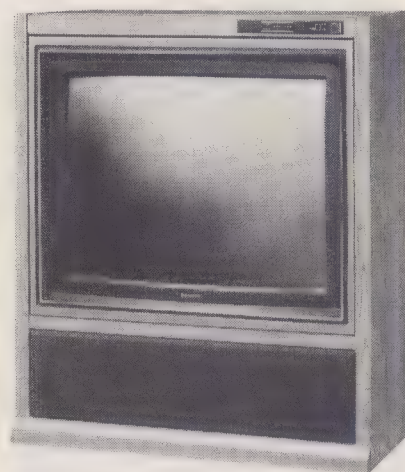
three hours of remote recording in 30-minute increments.

Prices: VHR500, \$279-299; VHR2700, \$500.

For additional information,
circle no. 154 on Reader Service Card.

35-Inch Direct View Screen from Sanyo

The Sanyo AVM350 monitor/receiver has a 35-inch direct view screen with a black matrix tube and comb filter for optimum clarity. The manufacturer boasts a horizontal resolution of 560 lines from a direct video input. Audio highlights include an MTS/dbx stereo decoder, dynamic noise reduction, a 7.5-watt-per-

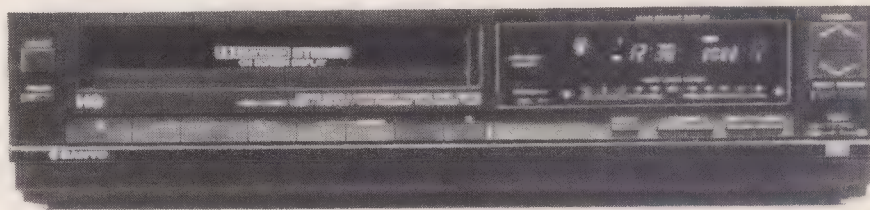


Sanyo AVM350

channel amplifier, external speaker jacks, three sets of audio/video inputs, and variable audio outputs. The 181-channel tuner and Sanyo's Digicon on-screen display can be controlled from the 32-button infrared remote. The AVM350 was previously available only as a component in the AV800 A/V system.

Price: \$3200.

For additional information,
circle no. 153 on Reader Service Card.



Sanyo VHR2700 VHS HQ VCR

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I hereby certify that I am at least 18 years of
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videocassette for home use only.

Signature _____

ALL ORDERS MUST BE SIGNED

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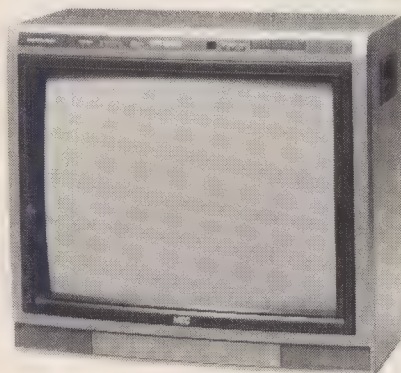
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New Products



Global Video With The Image Translator

Instant Replay's Image Translator
World Traveler VHS VCR plays and re-
records programs from different broadcast
standards. It plays PAL or NTSC signals
on PAL, NTSC, or RGB monitors, and



NEC Squares Off With 26-Inch TV

NEC's CT-2620A 26-inch monitor/re-
ceiver uses a tinted Square 90 picture
tube to reveal more information in the
corners, reduce geometric distortion,
and cut ambient light reflection. The
new set also incorporates a high-band
comb filter, to reduce color spill and in-
crease resolution, and cable-compatible
frequency synthesized tuning. Audio
highlights include stereo speakers, a
stereo amplifier, and an MTS/SAP stereo
decoder.

The CT-2620A also has two sets of
direct-line audio/video inputs, two RF in-
puts, monitor and TV outputs, and fixed
or variable audio outputs. Other features
include a 90-minute sleep timer, on-
screen channel and time displays, and
"quick view," which alternates back and
forth between two selected channels.
The infrared remote also controls any
NEC 900-series VCR.

Price: not available.

For additional information,
circle no. 156 on Reader Service Card.

records NTSC, PAL, MESECAM, and
French SECAM. The Image Translator
includes tuners and modulators for PAL
B/G, PAL I, NTSC, MESECAM, and
RGB signals. The four-head Hi-Fi
machine has 4-event/14-day program-
ming, still frame, pause, fast scan, and
a built-in test signal.

The Image Translator is available from
Instant Replay, 2951 S. Bayshore Dr.,
8th floor, Coconut Grove, Fla. 33133
(305-448-7088).

Price: \$1595.

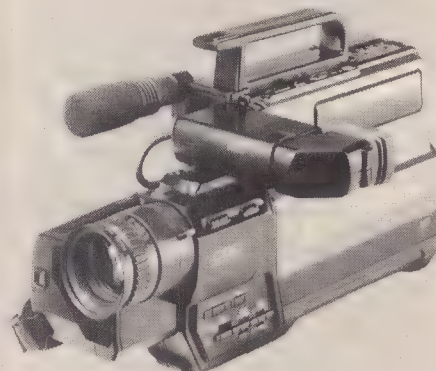
For additional information,
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NEC Zooms In On VHS Camcorder

The new V-30 VHS camcorder from
NEC features an unusual f/1.2 8x power
zoom lens with macro position, full infra-
red autofocus, and a CCD image sensor
that reduces image lag and retention and
performs in light as low as 7 lux. Other
advances include off-air recording capa-
bility, automatic date imprinting, fade-in/
fade-out capability, and an input for a
character generator. The V-30 has a
2/3-inch electronic viewfinder, auto
white balance, and HQ circuits for white
clip and detail enhancement.

Price: \$1859.

For additional information,
circle no. 157 on Reader Service Card.



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deleted. Each videocassette will carry a theme, such as "Lucy Wants to Be a Star," and come in a handsome case specially designed for the Collection. The videotape itself will have enhanced sound and picture, and be of the highest quality available.

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As a special bonus, if you act right now, we'll send you a copy of "The I Love Lucy Book," absolutely free. Packed with photos and behind-the-scenes action, this treasury of Lucy, Ricky, Fred and Ethel also includes plot summaries of every single episode. Yet even if you decide to return your first videocassette, you can keep the book as our gift.

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 *Applicable sales tax added to all orders.

New Products

Pioneer Receivers Unify A/V Equipment

Pioneer's two new audio/video receivers, the VSX-2000 and VSX-3000, feature the System Remote unified control, which operates numerous Pioneer components. Both receivers feature 20 random station presets with automatic and manual station search, a five-band graphic equalizer, a signal selector for separate audio and video switching, quartz-PLL synthesizer tuning, connections for two pairs of loudspeakers, and a fluorescent multi-function front panel with a clock and a programmable digital timer.

The VSX-2000 has 50 watts per channel and two video inputs, with a 24-key/34-function remote. The VSX-3000 offers 60 watts per channel and

three video inputs with two-way dubbing and simultaneous recording, along with a 40-key/53-function remote. The 3000's audio highlights include surround sound

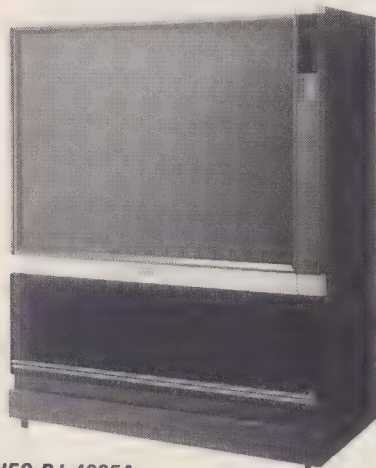
processing, a VCR noise filter, and an audio adapter loop.

Prices: VSX-2000, \$299.95; VSX-3000, \$349.95.

For additional information,
circle no. 158 on Reader Service Card.



Pioneer VSX-3000



NEC PJ-4625A

Brighter, More Vivid Projection TVs from NEC

NEC's two new projection TVs use an optically-coupled, liquid cooled CRT and lens system to reduce internal reflections and create brighter, more vivid pictures, according to the company. A black stripe pattern on the screens reduces ambient light reflection for better contrast. Comb filters provide a manufacturer-rated 500 lines of horizontal resolution from high-quality video inputs. The 41-inch PJ-4100A and the 46-inch PJ-4625A both use 6.5-inch picture tubes, f/1.0 hybrid glass lenses, stereo speakers, and terminals for external speakers.

Both TVs offer two sets of direct-line stereo audio/video inputs and outputs, two RF inputs, and one RF loop output. Other features include cable-compatible tuning, on-screen time and channel displays, and one-touch switching between two channels. The infrared remote also controls many NEC VCRs.

Prices: PJ-4100A, \$2800; PJ-4625A, \$3000.

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The Canovision 8, with its tiny 8mm tape cassette, is so light (3.5 lbs) and easy to use you can go "on location" anywhere—to the beach, the mountains, the playground, or even your own living room.

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For more information and the name of your nearest Canon Video dealer, call 1-800-343-4300, ext. 942.

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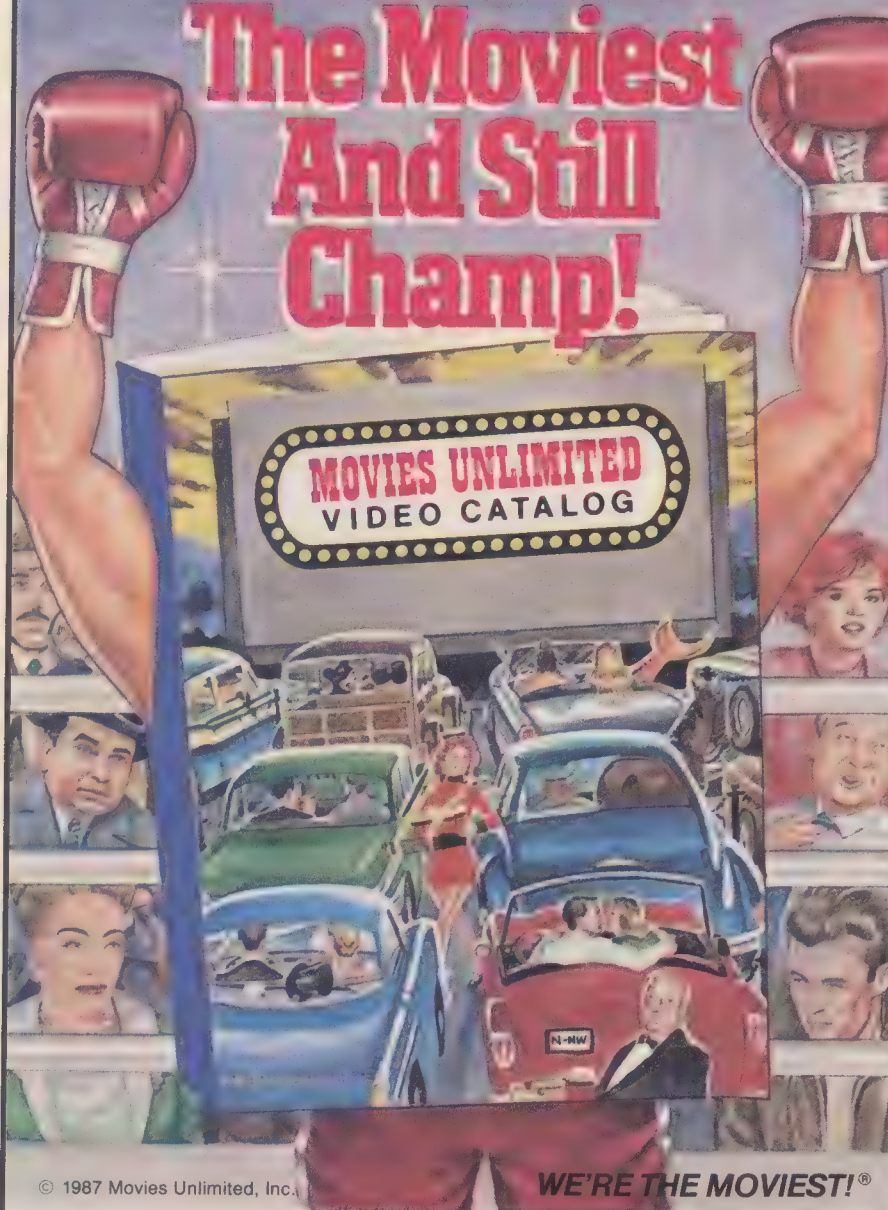
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V

New Products

RCA Goes Compact With VHS Camcorder

RCA enters the Compact VHS field with its CPR100 "Small Wonder" camcorder. The new model features the same metal oxide semiconductor (MOS) image sensor used by RCA's full-size Pro Wonder for improved resolution. The CPR100 weighs approximately 4 pounds with tape and battery, and records in light as low as 10 lux. The f/1.4 6x power zoom lens has macro capability, autofocus, and auto iris. The Small



Wonder also features HQ circuitry, auto white balance, and a 2/3-inch black & white electronic viewfinder with LED displays.

Accessories include a TC-20 Compact VHS cassette, a VHS cassette adapter, a one-hour battery, an earphone jack, a shoulder strap, an A/V output cable, an RF adapter, and an AC adapter/charger. For a short time RCA will also include the KK044 hard-shell carrying case with each purchase.

Price: \$1399.

For additional information, circle no. 160 on Reader Service Card.



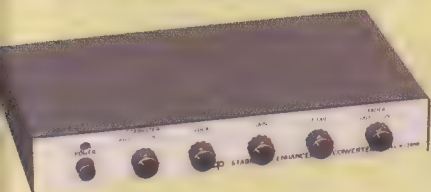
Compact Camcorder Light from Cool-Lux

Cool-Lux's Micro-Lux camcorder light weighs only 3 ounces and can mount on the top of most camcorders. It provides 9000 beams candlepower of illumination for sharper images and deeper focusing in low light. The 35-watt Micro-Lux can run continuously for 1-3/4 hours when powered by a 12-volt battery. It can also be powered from a car cigarette lighter or through an AC adapter. The lamp is available in black, silver, gold, red, or blue.

Price: \$79.95.

For additional information, circle no. 161 on Reader Service Card.

BP Video Processor gives you precision picture control.



You'll get 5 units in one! The BP Video Processor functions as a **Stabilizer** to end video guard distortion...as an **Enhancer** to provide peak sharpness...as an **RF Converter** to feed signals from video cameras, computer or VCR in your TV...as a **Video Fader** for professional fade-in and fade-out effects...and as a **Dual Output Distribution Amplifier** to send TV signals to other sets.

\$79⁹⁵

Model V-1880

Preserve your memories on videotape



The video-cine converts your slides and home movies to VCR tape with any video camera. This easy to use model features precision optics and rear projection. Macro lens attachment available for cameras without close-up capability.

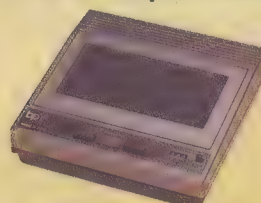
Model V-1701

\$37⁹⁵

Macro Lens Attachment

Model V-14 **\$14⁹⁵**

Increase the life of your VCR head and tape with BP VHS or Beta Tape Rewinders.



Don't risk worn-down heads and tape damage by rewinding on your VCR. BP Tape Rewinders feature counter, soft button action, controlled speed and automatic shutoff.

Model V-7779

VHS **\$49⁹⁵**

Model V-7780

BETA **\$49⁹⁵**

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Model HF-9

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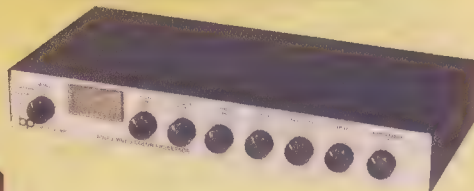


You'll get clear, crisp, undistorted sound from this high quality, directional FM antenna. Mounts instantly indoors, comes complete with coaxial cable and transformer.

\$34⁹⁵

Model FM-9700

Get true-to-life color...and reduce noise...with Audio Video Color Processor.



This versatile color processor corrects off color tape, eliminates single color dominance and restores sharpness in detail. Plus, it stabilizes copy guarded tapes and filters audio noise.

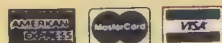
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Model V-1895

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Fine Tuning

Your Video Questions Answered

All Out

Q Thanks for the "Fine Tuning" item about the "secret" remote eject feature on Sony's SL-HF750 Betamax (Dec. '86). On my Sony SL-HF550 VCR, remote eject can also be obtained by pushing the record button on the remote. If the knock-out tab on the cassette is missing, the VCR simply ejects it.

Jeff Blystone
Erie, Penn.

A Many of Sony's recent Beta machines have this feature. In addition, if you try to use your VCR's timer mode with a cassette that has had the tab removed, the machine will eject the tape.

Some VHS machines also work this way. The Toshiba M-5900 and DX-7 eject tapes missing the knock-out tabs if you try to record. On some other makes and models, pressing record will just give you play instead.

EP Or Not EP?

Q I own two VHS VCRs—a Fisher FVH-810 and an NEC N-915U. Is there a reason why many of the tapes I've recorded in the EP mode, and which have sat on the shelf for some time, now play back with video noise that only goes away after I alter the tracking knob? Since the problem appears with both machines, I can only blame the tapes.

Ben R. Wilkie
York, Me.

A Tape "interchange"—the ability to play a tape made on one VCR on another VCR—is influenced by many factors. They include the taping speed (in this case EP), the age and condition of the VCRs and video heads,

the quality of the videotape stock, and how the tape has been stored. Tape is a plastic medium and environmental factors can cause it to stretch or shrink imperceptibly.

Tapes recorded at faster speed have better interchangeability, although they are still vulnerable to the effects of old or poorly aligned VCRs, bad tape, or worn video heads. That's why SP is the favored speed for prerecorded tapes.

The solution? Avoid taping anything you want to keep at the slow speed. It's not suitable for long-term video archiving. If possible, try to dub whatever you want to save from your existing EP collection to a faster SP tape. There will be some loss of video quality, but the longer you wait, the more risk there will be that your EP collection may one day become unplayable.

Worn Belt

Q I recently purchased a used RCA VCT-200 VCR. It worked fine for awhile. But, one day, when the tape reached the end of a reel, the rewind wouldn't work. Neither would fast forward. When I ejected the cassette, a large mess of tape came out with it. I was told this was probably due to a broken belt. If this is the problem, can I fix it myself?

Ed Clossen
Springfield, Ohio

A RCA's VCT-200 dates back to 1978, so yours probably had more than a few miles on it when you bought it. While most of today's machines use direct drive motors for many functions, belt-driven reels and idlers

were common back then, so a broken belt is one explanation for your problem.

To check it out, you'll have to take the bottom off the machine and unscrew and fold back a couple of circuit boards. If the belt is broken, you can buy a replacement from an RCA repair center. Many large electronics stores stock the more common belts used in earlier VCRs, as well as service manuals for them. If the belt is not the cause, you'll need the manual to find the problem. If you get in over your head, we recommend you give up the machine. The labor charges on non-warranty VCR repairs translate into expensive repairs: an authorized service center will most likely charge more than your machine is now worth.

Dualing Camcorders

Q After reading and re-searching, I'm ready to buy a video camera. I'm considering the new Sony CCD-V110 8mm camcorder and the RCA VLP-970 VHS portable. Since the Sony has audio/video outputs, will I be able to record directly onto VHS? Also, will I be able to record on 8mm and VHS machines at the same time? If so, will my VHS tape be considered a first generation or second generation recording of the 8mm tape? Finally, will the flying erase head and other features on the 8mm camcorder improve the VHS recording?

Louis Savetsky
Englewood, N.J.

A While the Sony camcorder is designed to be used alone, with an 8mm tape, it is possible to use it as a camera head, recording the signal

onto another VCR, such as the RCA VLP-970 you're considering. Simultaneous recordings are possible, too, with an 8mm and VHS tape rolling in both machines.

Both tapes made would be considered first generation. A second generation tape would be any copy made from either of the two originals, regardless of format.

While some of the features of the Sony (such as the non-sticking characteristics of the solid-state CCD pickup), will carry over to both machines, the clean cut feature of the flying erase head is built into the 8mm's tape transport. The quality of the edits achieved with the RCA will depend on its own backspace editing circuitry.

European PALs

Q I know you can't play NTSC videotapes in PAL-type VCRs. But does this also apply to videodiscs? I have friends in Romania, where the system is PAL, and I want to send them some videodiscs. Are American videodiscs compatible with PAL videodiscs, the way that CDs are?

Petra Duna
Cicero, Ill.

A NTSC format videodiscs won't play back on PAL videodisc players or vice-versa. In many instances, the players can be adjusted to operate on different voltages or line frequencies. Once you have the machine operating, you will be able to hook it to an NTSC TV (also running off the proper power supply) and view the discs. To view PAL videodiscs over here, you'll need a PAL videodisc player and a PAL TV.

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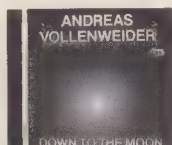
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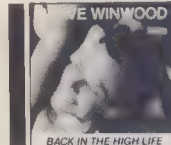


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Stereo Trends

Q Why is it that PBS stations simulcast their stereo audio over an FM radio station, rather than using the MTS system that's now available on so many new TVs and VCRs?

Gary Hedges
Tustin, Calif.

A Most PBS TV stations are stereo pioneers, and have been simulcasting stereo audio programs for years—long before the MTS (Multichannel Tele-

vision Sound) system was agreed upon back in 1984. There's no technical reason why they can't switch to the MTS system, which is compatible with VHF and UHF broadcasters, and eventually some stations may make the switch. In the meantime, you've got to get stereo audio by recording it from your FM receiver, and mixing it with the video coming in from your VCR's tuner, using the "simulcast" or "2 CH" setting on the VCR.

This method of stereocasting is still widely used, and not just by PBS. Some cable services use it as well—which is why even the newest MTS VCRs continue to give you the capability to mix an external audio source with the video coming from the VCR's tuner.

Light's Out

Q I have a Sony KP-4110 projection TV, which has three sets of audio/video inputs, in addition to a built-in tuner. When I have it switched to the tuner mode, the MTS stereo light comes on when I'm tuned to stations broadcasting in stereo. I also have several VCRs hooked into the three A/V inputs. One has its own MTS tuner, while two are mono. Sometimes, when I'm viewing the signal from one of the mono VCRs, the red stereo light on the TV stays lit. Other times it doesn't. The same problem afflicts the MTS VCR. Even though its own stereo light is on, I don't always get the stereo light on the TV.

Is there a problem with the set, or am I misunderstanding its operation?


Fred Griswald
San Francisco, Calif.

A Simply put, the stereo light comes on when the set's tuner is on a stereo station, and goes off if you happen to be on a non-stereo station, regardless of which audio/video you have selected. Just ignore the stereo light when you're viewing a signal from one of the A/V inputs. The only time it's valid is when you're looking at a signal coming from the set's own tuner. This confusion could have been avoided had the sets been designed to extinguish the superfluous MTS pilot light when you switch away from the main tuner. Maybe future models will fix this feature.

Pane-less

Q Please explain why front-loading VCRs no longer have a clear top window. With the window, the user can look inside and see how much tape remains or has been used up, as well as read the label on the cassette.

Myron Shulman
Brooklyn, N.Y.

A Not all Sony's VCRs have given up on the window. It's on the current SL-HFT7 SuperBeta Theater Betamax, which comes in two colors: sand and mauve, but not black. The SL-HF550 also has a window although it only comes in black. 

VIDEO welcomes your questions. Please do not enclose self-addressed envelopes as the volume of mail does not allow personal replies. Questions may be edited for clarity and space. Address letters to **Fine Tuning, VIDEO Magazine**, 460 West 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

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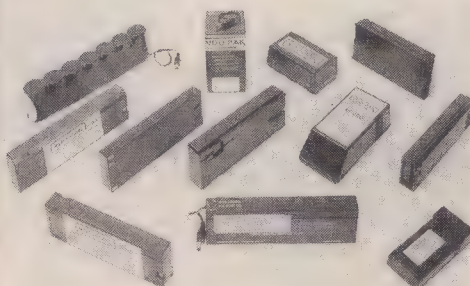
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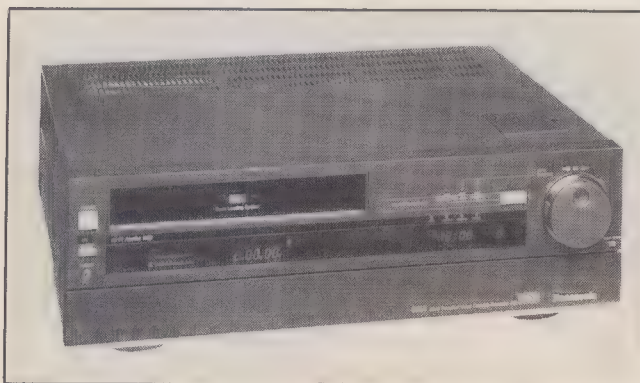
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TV Den

Techniques and Technology

New Deck For VHS Edits

by Roderick
Woodcock



Panasonic's AG-1950 is a sophisticated VHS VCR with special features for unusually clean edits.

The wait is over. The VHS camp has finally introduced a VCR with editing features equal to such "ultimate" Beta decks as Sony's SL-HF1000 Betamax. Panasonic's new AG-1950 VHS VCR should please the fussiest home videophiles, especially those

rests on four "hockey puck" legs, each nearly two inches in diameter, which help dampen vibrations and stabilize the machine.

Three innovations set the AG-1950 apart from other VHS VCRs. One is its edits, accomplished by a frame-width flying-erase head on the video drum. In fact, the video drum on the AG-1950 is an octopus of heads: there are four video heads, two Hi-Fi audio heads, one flying-erase head, and an inactive "blank" to maintain head-wheel balance.

Another innovation gives you instant forward and reverse tape motion control through a jog/shuttle dial. You can jog back and forth between frames in either direction. You can move from ■ still frame, through several slow motion speeds (1/5, 1/7, 1/10, 1/20, and 1/30), to a 3 or 5 times SP search speed (5, 7, 9, or 11 times for EP tapes).

Search quality is extremely good at both SP and EP speeds, thanks to double-azimuth video heads and supplemental circuitry designed to minimize noise-bar interference. While the AG-1950 is billed as an SP/EP machine, it will play back LP format tapes, although the search quality and special effects won't equal the other two speeds.

Perhaps the AG-1950's most important innovation is its highly accurate linear time readout, which is calculated and displayed in hours, minutes, and seconds. The information is derived from the control track on the lower edge of the videotape. Making this feature possible on

an M-loading VHS VCR meant changing the way the tape normally threads and shuttles.

Beta and VHS formats differ in the way tape threads around the video drum. Beta tape threads around the drum as soon as the cassette is loaded, and remains there during every operation, retracting into the cassette only when ejected. Since the tape touches the VCR's control head during all the shuttle modes, it was possible for Beta to offer a linear time readout on its machines some time ago.

In VHS, the tape unthreads from the video drum in the stop mode, losing contact with the control head. During regular fast forward and rewind, the tape moves directly from one reel in the cassette to the other, bypassing the video drum and control head.

So how did Panasonic devise a system that calculates the linear time readout? Instead of having the tape unthread completely from the drum, the AG-1950 retracts it into an inverted V-shape, with a special sub-loading arm keeping the tape in constant contact with the control head on the right side of the video drum.

For even better tape motion continuity, the rotation of the take-up reel in the cassette is locked whenever the VCR threads or unthreads, preventing any tape slippage that could mar the accuracy of the counter. Counter accuracy is crucial, since it influences the amount of precision needed to edit tapes.

Editing of course is how this VCR shines and Pana-

who prefer VHS for its mammoth film library but envy Beta for the relative sophistication of its editing decks.

The AG-1950 is being distributed by Panasonic's Industrial Video Division, but is available to non-pros. This isn't the video version of Janitor in a Drum. It's true industrial strength video. Make no mistake, this machine is not meant for the average videophile, not with a suggested price of \$1500. Even with the usual discounts, the machine will still sell for well over \$1000.

For that kind of money, however, you get a full-featured, very sophisticated VCR, designed to be a work horse. It's housed in a dull black metal cabinet that measures about 5-1/2-inches high by 17 wide by 15-1/2 deep. At 23.1 pounds, it's heavier than most consumer VCRs, but is sturdily built. It

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sonic makes the most of it with a host of professional features. The AG-1950 offers an animation mode, in which you can obtain four or five frames (about one-sixth of a second) of recorded video by touching the record button once in the record/pause mode. The VCR records the four or five frames, stops, and automatically recues for the next segment.

To take this feature the next step, an "intervalometer" mode gives a fixed recording of about two seconds followed

by an automatic pause of about four seconds. This creates a time-lapse video effect, so that T-160 tape (which normally has a total EP time of eight hours) can record more than 22 hours of time-expanded video. Of course, it becomes "time compressed" video when you view it in real time.

There's also a cue feature to rapidly locate any spot on the tape where you've left an index point, which appears as a slight blank space in the audio

track. An audio-mute button assigns these spots as needed.

For maximum editing flexibility, the AG-1950 has two sets of audio/video inputs and outputs, with one set of inputs on the front for fast hook ups. In another welcome departure, the video jacks provided are the heavy-duty BNC (bayonet nut connector) variety, which are very rugged.

As expected, the AG-1950 is an HQ machine with all four of the HQ picture enhancing elements: a 20 percent white clip expansion, luminance and chrominance noise reduction, and detail enhancement. The test tapes I made with it were the equal of any other HQ machine I've examined recently and clearly better than some of the less costly "half-HQ" machines, which scrimp by with only the white clip expansion and luminance noise reduction.

While the AG-1950 comes with a frequency-synthesized cable-ready tuner and records in Hi-Fi stereo, it doesn't have a broadcast stereo MTS tuner. Nor can it record or play back linear, split-track stereo; it offers only a single, monaural linear channel. Adding MTS would certainly broaden the AG-1950's appeal, but the lack of two separate linear audio channels is a more serious limitation for a machine touted as an "editing" deck.

Split-track audio doesn't always mean stereophonic sound. Often, it's useful to be able to combine one channel of audio, like narration, with audio recorded at the scene of a shoot, or with background music. It's possible to dub in these other audio elements later—replacing the original mono track, while preserving the same audio on the Hi-Fi tracks—but Hi-Fi audio can't be edited since it combines with the video signal. The machine would have had more flexibility if it had two separate, and dub-able audio channels.

Inevitably, there will be comparisons made between Sony's SL-HF1000 Betamax and the AG-1950. The Sony 1000 offers an MTS stereo tuner, on-screen programming, a linear time readout with a frame counter, on-screen and at the VCR, an elaborate remote control that duplicates the VCR's jog/shuttle, a four font titler, a black-screen generator, a tape indexing system that can hold 15 eraseable cues, and an editing interface able to remember up to eight edit events.

On a feature-by-feature basis, the Beta machine beats the VHS. But the AG-1950 has demonstrated the true potential of VHS VCRs. It's not perfect, but if you're a fastidious videophile looking for the best value in a high-end VHS VCR, this one is definitely worth looking into. ✓

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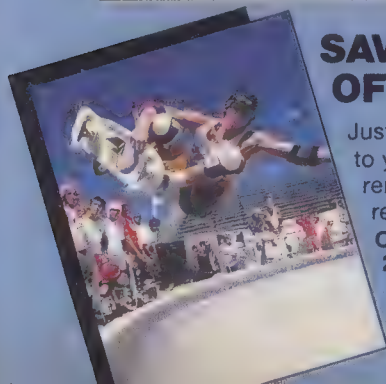
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The Camcorner

New Equipment & Shooting Tips

The Essential Camcorder

by Roderick Woodcock

Since the first Betamovie camcorder debuted a scant four years ago, the popularity of the all-in-one camcorder has grown tremendously, with Beta, VHS, Compact VHS, and 8mm camcorder sales eclipsing those of the bulkier two-piece camera/recorder combinations that were available "BC" (Before Camcorders).

Regardless of your dream camcorder's format, you'll want to get as many features as you can for your hard earned dollars. What are the essentials? For most buyers, they include a power zoom lens, macro focusing, an electronic viewfinder with tape playback capability, and audio/video inputs and outputs.

Some specialized camcorders, like Sony's Betamovie and Handycam and the new JVC GR-C9, have opted delete features such as electronic viewfinders and tape playback. By reducing size and weight and simplifying their machines they hope to create "point-and-shoot" camcorders that may be less intimidating for some users.

In addition to the above staples, many manufacturers have added extra bells and whistles to increase their machines' versatility and appeal to first-time buyers. In these more sophisticated models,

the features that are coming to be considered essential now include auto iris exposure systems, with manual overrides or backlight controls; a zoom lens that allows a choice between two or more speeds; record/review for playing back the last few seconds of a tape to see what has just been shot; date, time, and character generators for titling and logging tapes; and fade controls that progressively turn a scene black or white, so that less abrupt transitions between one scene and the next can be created.

Impressive as these features are, many have appeared only in some models. Here's a quick wish list of additional features that would be included on the ideal camcorder:

Flying-Erase Head: This new advance is fast becoming indispensable for situations where the tape is stopped and started many times as scenes are shot and added to sequences. Instead of having a fixed head inside the camcorder erase the tape before a new signal is recorded, a more accurate rotating video head mounted on the video drum does the job instead. The result is seamless, invisible editing between scenes without any of the tearing or rainbow-like stains produced with conventional backspace editing. Flying erase heads are available on most 8mm machines, and on at least one high-end Beta and one table-model VHS VCR, so why not on VHS camcorders as well?

Stereo Sound: So far only two camcorders offer stereo audio—Kodak's MVS-5000, which is part of its

Modular Video System, and Zenith's VM7100, a VHS machine with stereo Hi-Fi and mono linear audio. The MVS-5000 not only records in stereo, it's digital stereo, using the digital standard established for 8mm. Many other 8mm camcorders, including the Kodak, also record Hi-Fi audio. It's not stereo Hi-Fi, however; it's higher quality mono audio which mixes the audio with the video signal, instead of recording "low fi" audio on the edge of the slow moving videotape.

Low-fi or not, a camcorder that offers split-track linear audio capabilities would be a versatile performer, with two channels of audio that could be manipulated to better effect. For example, one channel could carry narration, while the other could carry background music.

Modular Design: This has been used in professional camcorders for years. Its major advantage is that if one part of the system needs repair or adjustment the other half is still usable. One-piece designs don't offer this flexibility. When something breaks, the whole thing is rendered unusable.

Interchangeable Lenses: Before camcorders stole the limelight, many deluxe video cameras offered interchangeable lenses, allowing the user to select the optic needed to accommodate particular shots. Wildlife photographers, for example, who thrive on super-long telephoto lenses, must be frustrated by the relative inconvenience of camcorders, none of which let them add lenses that go beyond the standard 6:1 or 8:1 zoom ratios. Interchange-

able lenses could be just another aspect of a modular approach.

Multifunction Remotes: While most camcorders offer full control over the tape transport through buttons on the housing, not all let you access the controls with a remote. Panasonic's PV-300, for example, has a simple pause control for its remote, while Sony's CCD-V8AF lets you plug in an RM-84 remote control that controls virtually every function, even lens zooming.

Detachable Viewfinder: Most camcorders with electronic viewfinders let you remove them. The feature is designed for storage convenience. But detachability has other advantages. When shooting scenes that don't require constant monitoring of the viewfinder, unplugging it saves power and extends the life of the battery. In the case of the Hitachi series of VHS camcorders (which appear under Hitachi, RCA, and Minolta brand names, among others), the socket from the unplugged viewfinder doubles as the socket for the external video signal recording adapter.

Intervalometer: The clean-cut editing provided by flying-erase heads makes it possible to build a VCR that can accomplish smooth animation or time-lapse effects. The intervalometer, a timing device which allows the single frame exposures needed for time lapse photography, is already available on models such as the Sony deluxe CCD-V110 8mm. When flying-erase heads become standard for VHS camcorders, this important feature should also be added. 

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Audio Input

The Sound Side of Video

The Digital Difference

by Ivan Berger

Digital audio has been making its mark for several years in such readily available forms as phonograph records made from digital master tapes, all-digital Compact Discs, and PCM converters that let you make digital recordings on your VCR. More recently we've had LaserVision players and discs and 8mm VCRs with digital sound tracks. Sometime in 1987 we should be able to buy digital audio tape (DAT) cassette systems.

So far, though, digital's impact on video has been small: a few TVs with digital processing for sharper pictures and flashy extra features like picture-in-picture, along with a handful of VCRs that also concentrate on special effects. But the trickle of innovations will become a flood in the coming years, with more digital features in TVs and VCRs, and perhaps the introduction of all-digital, professional VCRs.

Since the 19th century (when the telephone, phonograph, and magnetic recording were invented) we've used analog techniques to store and transmit signals. That is, we've been building electronic models of the events we're sending or re-

cording. If the event was a sound wave's quivering variations in air pressure, we modeled it as voltage variations on a telephone wire, wiggles in a phonograph groove, or varying magnetic fields along a wire or tape.

Year by year, for over a century, we've brought these models closer to perfection. Today it's possible to make analog tapes in the studio that capture all the frequencies of sound about as perfectly as any ear can discern, and add only barely perceptible noise and distortion to the signal. The recordings you hear at home, however, are copies of these master tapes, several generations removed. And with each generation the quality gets worse: information that belongs in the signal gets lost, information that does not belong is added as distortion or noise.

With analog, that's inevitable. As long as both the desired information and the undesired noise are represented the same way—by squiggles in the groove or by magnetic variations—the player has no way of telling which is which.

Digital recording doesn't build models. It builds maps, lists of numerical coordinates that describe, instant by instant, the signal and its variations. Then it records and transmits those coordinates as binary numbers, eventually using them to redraw an accurate map of the original signal.

To make these digital maps, a digital system samples an audio wave or other

analog signal, measuring and recording the signal's level at regular, closely-spaced intervals. Both the number of measurements per second, known as the sampling rate, and the precision with which the signal levels are recorded affect the quality of the recording.

The sampling rate controls the system's frequency response. In practice, the highest frequency you can record is a bit less than half the sampling frequency. Compact Discs, for instance, by sampling the signal 44,100 times per second (at a rate of 44.1 kilohertz), can record audio frequencies up to 20,000 Hertz, the nominal upper limit of human hearing. (The digital recorders used in recording studios use an even higher rate, 48 kHz). Because the digital soundtracks on 8mm VCRs use a sampling rate of only 35 kHz, they can only handle audio frequencies up to 15 kHz. That's about the same as FM or TV broadcasts, but less than LP records or half-inch Hi-Fi VCRs.

The numerical precision—the number of digits with which the signals are transcribed—controls the signal's noise and distortion levels. The more precisely we describe the waveform when we record its levels, the more precisely we can recreate it during playback, and the less noise and distortion it will contain. The digits are binary, each standing for a power of two. Each added digit doubles the size of our vocabulary. In other words, if we describe the signal levels

twice as precisely, we halve the noise and distortion.

Since signal quality depends on the sampling rate and the number of bits per sample, the signal quality is as good as the number of data bits we can afford to give it. On the other hand, we can never make a signal better without changing the entire system. For example, a Compact Disc player's 44.1 kHz sampling rate and 16-bit samples ensure a frequency response to 20 kHz and a signal-to-noise ratio of 96 decibels. You could make a better recording if you used more bits and sampled more often, but no CD player could decipher it; it would no longer meet the system's standards.

Because those standards set a top as well as a bottom limit on signal quality, we must be sure those standards are selected with care. Set them too high, and we're paying for improvements that no one can hear. Set them too low, and we have a system that's permanently crippled.

Once we've set our standards, however, we can begin to enjoy another vital advantage of digital records. With digital, we can copy and recopy for as many generations as we like without any signal degradation. In an upcoming column, we'll see how digital's binary number system makes possible such flawless duplication. 

Ivan Berger is Technical Editor of Audio Magazine, and co-author of The New Sound of Stereo.

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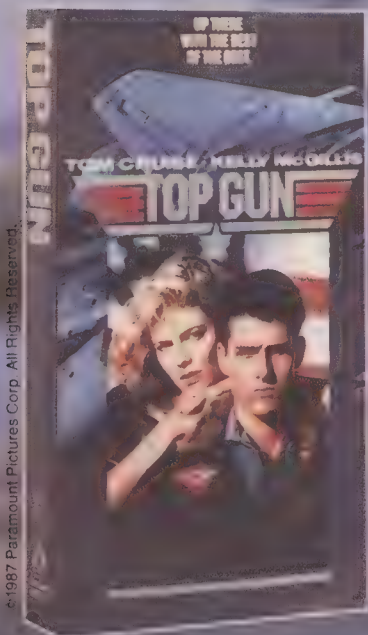
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Photo/Herbert Migdoll

Monitor picture The Joffrey Ballet in John Cranko's, "The Taming of the Shrew."

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The first commercially available television set appeared during 1928 in a small advertisement in *Television* magazine by the Daven Corporation of Newark, New Jersey. The price of progress? For \$75, you could get a TV that received either 24, 36, or 48 line transmissions (the transmission standard in the U.S. today is 525 lines). Never mind that there were no television stations beaming programs on a regular basis then; these initial sets were but the first phase in a glorious 20th Century experiment. Owning one meant you were a visionary.

Thousands of Daven sets sold, as did others like them in the following years, though relatively few people had the \$75 to \$650 these consumer electronics commanded. At today's prices, the range would be about \$500 to \$4500 (for a nine-inch console TV). Of course, television entertainment has never been particularly cheap. It's still true today, if not more so, because a TV is no longer considered complete if it doesn't have a VCR to go along with it.

Still, a good TV/VCR combination

needn't send you fleeing to Uncle Sam for a Third World loan. If you look carefully, you can buy top quality for under \$600, less than the cost of a dinner for six at some top restaurants. You can ratchet your video tab up to \$700 if you're buying at retail prices, but hardly anyone does. At the other end, discount stores can cut your total by as much as 40 percent, so that a modicum of shopping savvy can equip you with a good quality color TV and an equally fine VCR for around \$500. This won't always be the case, but it's certainly possible given today's price wars. A little less effort will still let you score a full video system for under \$600.

Because actual, or "street," prices vary so widely, we'll be quoting manufacturers' suggested prices up to \$700 for a TV/VCR duo. But think of them as ceilings, not minimums. If you're wondering how much you need to spend for a good quality TV and VCR, especially if they'll be used as a second system, \$600 or less is a realistic answer, and you may come away from your shopping as pleased by how much you've "saved" as by the images on your new

By Gordon McComb

home video equipment.

Budget combos come in handy as starter systems, for use in the home or at college, as second sets in a den or bedroom, in a camper on your next cross-country trek, even at the office. Stretching your video dollars takes nothing more than analyzing your needs, deciding which features are really important to you, and not being afraid to ask for less costly models.

CHOOSING A LOW-COST VCR

As with their more expensive brethren, the majority of VCRs with retail price tags under \$400 are VHS. There are only a few Beta models left, all sold by Sony and Sears. Portable and 8mm VCRs cost at least \$100 more.

With very few exceptions, such as RCA's VMT-385 (\$399), budget VCRs come with only two video heads. The heads are designed to provide optimum picture quality at the fast SP speed. This means there is some picture degradation when recording and playing back tapes at the other, slower speeds. But the slight loss of quality often isn't noticeable. You need a four-head VCR if you want maximum picture quality at both fast and slow speeds.

Programmable timers are standard on all VCRs, low-cost models included. Originally, timers found on most low-end models only let you program one event during a one or seven-day period. Now, the majority of decks for under \$400 let you program a minimum of four events over a 7- or 14-day period, on any channel.

A good number of low-cost VCRs are equipped with cable-ready tuners. If you have cable service, you can attach the VCR directly to the cable outlet and receive channels without a converter box (the VCR does not decode a scrambled channel; you still need a decoder box for that). Cable and non-cable-ready tuners can dial in regular UHF and VHF channels. Surprisingly, remote control is standard on almost all VCRs, low-cost models included. Virtually all are now wireless, and operate from up to 20 feet away from the VCR.

Pay attention to the number and type of functions the remote provides. At the very least, the remote should let you change channels and operate the main controls on the VCR—including stop, play, rewind, fast forward, and record. Better remotes allow more functions, like special video effects (if offered by the VCR).

Speaking of special effects: all but a few decks offer visual fast scan in forward and reverse, as well as freeze frame (or visual pause). A couple of models, including the RCA VMT-285 (\$329), come with frame advance. And a couple of low-cost models, such as the RCA VMT-385 (\$399) and the Sanyo VHR-1350 (\$349.95), offer slow motion video.

Though most under-\$400 VCRs have video special effects of one type or another, the on-screen appearance of the effects

isn't high quality. During fast scanning and slow motion, for instance, the picture fills with rolling bars of snow—video noise. Higher-end VCRs often use a fourth video head for special effects. The additional head removes or reduces the noise and presents a cleaner picture.

SuperBeta and HQ circuits, used in Beta and VHS decks, respectively, increase pic-

TVs and VCRs are routinely discounted. A model with a \$350 suggested price can often be purchased for less than \$260. Find a couple of models you like and shop around for the best prices.

ture resolution by 10 to 30 percent. At this writing, there are no SuperBeta VCRs in the under-\$400 price range. There are a few HQ VHS decks in the range, including GE's 9-7100 and new 9-7135 (\$399.99 each) and models built by Sanyo. But most include only the two most basic of the four HQ circuits.

You can even find a few low-cost VCRs, like Fisher's FEH919 (\$400), that can record and play back tapes in stereo audio. There aren't many yet, but the situation may change so it's worth keeping an eye out for stereo models.

SCREENING TVS

It's not hard to find a color television anymore for under a \$400 suggested price; there are dozens, though not all may be available at a given time in your area. Small-screen models are legion, and every major manufacturer has at least one 19-inch version.

Low-cost sets tend to be in the 9- to 19-inch screen size class. A set with a 9- or 10-inch screen, like Emerson's EC-10R (\$379.95) or Sylvania's CZF105CH (\$289), can be viewed by a couple of people, as long as they're friends and aren't too far from the set; larger TVs are suitable for

groups and larger rooms. The point is to get a set with a screen big enough to accommodate the room it's likely to go in and the number of people likely to watch at once.

An increasing number of under-\$400 sets are monitor/receivers. They have regular VHF and UHF antenna terminals as well as direct audio and video jacks. The jacks improve picture and sound quality when watching tapes. A few low-cost sets are monitors only; models such as NEC's 12-inch PM-1271 (\$400) and Sears' 14-inch 40801 (\$300) lack VHF and UHF inputs. They are best suited for use as satellite receiver monitors or when you don't plan to do off-air viewing.

Low-cost VCRs come with many of the features found in higher priced models, but economical TVs are routinely stripped of advanced capabilities. You won't find any with MTS stereo decoders, or MPX jacks for use with an external decoder. Front and rear panel controls are kept to a minimum, small audio amplifiers and speakers produce marginal sound, and remote control is limited or absent.

On the other hand, many low-cost sets, like the 13-inch Magnavox RG-40495L (\$349), have cable-ready tuners, and some, like the 13-inch Sears 40803 (\$340) have direct digital and analog RGB inputs, for use with personal computers.

Most tabletop VCRs have similar dimensions, but the physical size of TVs varies widely, even among sets with the same screen size. You'll want to consider size if space is an important factor. The average dimensions of a 9- or 10-inch set are approximately 11 inches in height by 14 inches in width by 12 inches in depth. Being only 12 inches deep, the very small sets can be perched atop a shelf in a den or a dorm room, or tucked in a cubby in a camper or office.

Sets with 13-inch screens are usually an inch or two larger all the way around and may not fit easily on a shelf. Sets with 15- or 19-inch screens, though often touted as "portable," are heavier and bigger than you'd think, and best suited for a TV cart or table.

SHOPPING SMART

Hardly anybody buys video equipment at its suggested, or list, price. The tens of millions of VCRs and TVs sold each year make them extremely attractive to mass merchandisers who make their money by buying and selling in quantity.

VCRs are routinely discounted 10 to 30 percent, and sometimes more, so that a deck with a suggested price of \$349 may actually cost less than \$260 in the store. By the same token, it's not hard to find a VCR with a suggested price of \$550 actually selling for under \$400. If you're on a budget, find a couple of models that appeal to you and shop around for the best price. The same goes for TVs, although the discounts

continued on page 114

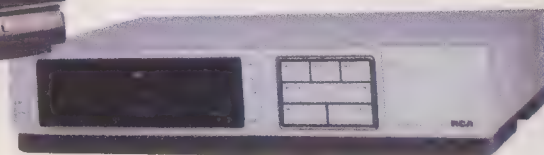
DYNAMIC DUOS FOR HOME AND AWAY

Videophiles who want a second TV/VCR set-up—for home, office, or on-the-road—can buy an inexpensive combo for well under \$700. Following are five affordable suggestions for different applications. Prices are suggested by the manufacturers, but most models can be purchased for considerably less.

IN THE DEN

- Magnavox RG4049SL
13-inch TV..... \$349
- RCA VMT-285 VHS VCR..... \$329

The Magnavox RG4049SL color TV has a 13-inch screen and a UHF/VHF random access tuner that also receives up to 24 non-scrambled cable channels. The TV has onscreen channel display and a 17-button remote. The RCA VMT-285 VHS VCR is a two-head machine with HQ circuitry, a 4-event/14-day timer, cable-compatible tuning, frame advance, freeze frame, one-touch record, and infrared remote control. The condensed size of the combo makes it perfect for small gatherings in the den. **Total price: \$678.**

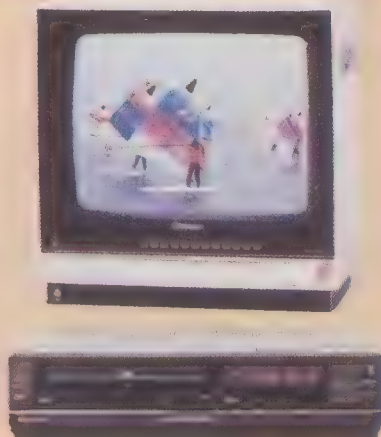


**Magnavox RG4049SL 13-inch TV
and RCA VMT-285 VHS VCR**

IN THE DORM

- Samsung C3901F 13-inch
monitor/receiver..... \$280
- Sanyo VHR-1250 VHS VCR..... \$369

The Samsung C3901F is a monitor/receiver small enough for most desks. It can double as a TV or a video monitor, making it perfect for use with a VCR or a personal computer. The set tunes all UHF and VHF channels. The Sanyo VHR-1250 VCR is a two-head HQ model with a 107-channel cable-compatible tuner, infrared remote control, and 4-event/14-day programming. **Total price: \$649.**



**Samsung C3901F 13-inch monitor/receiver
and Sanyo VHR-1250 VHS VCR**

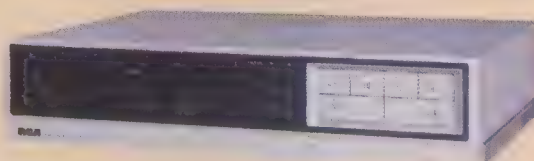
IN THE FAMILY ROOM

- Sanyo 91C511 19-inch TV..... \$280
- RCA VMT-385 VHS VCR..... \$399

Family rooms and living rooms, where many people gather at once, require larger screens. The Sanyo 91C511 color TV has a 19-inch screen and tunes to all VHF and UHF channels (but not cable channels). The RCA VMT-385 VHS VCR is a 3-head HQ machine with 4-event/14-day programming, frame advance, freeze frame, slow motion, one-touch record, and an infrared remote control. **Total price: \$679.**



**Sanyo 91C511
19-inch TV and
RCA VMT-385
VHS VCR**



IN THE OFFICE

- Sears 40843 13-inch
monitor/receiver..... \$340
- Panasonic PV-1360 VHS VCR.... \$350

The Sears 40843 is a high-resolution monitor/receiver that accepts signals from off-the-air, from a VCR, or from a computer. It features 30 percent screen compression to make RGB signals from computers easier to read. The Panasonic PV-1360 VHS VCR is a two-head machine with 14-day/4-event programming, HQ circuitry, freeze frame, one-touch record, and an infrared remote. The versatility of this combo makes it deal for office set-ups. **Total price: \$690.**

IN THE CAMPER

- Sylvania CZF105CH 9-inch TV... \$289
- Sony SL-250 Beta VCR..... \$400

The Sylvania CZF105CH is a portable 9-inch color TV set that operates off either AC or DC power, making it ideal for use in a camper or other locations where a wall socket isn't available. It comes with a car adapter cord for hooking up to a cigarette lighter. A separate DC battery pack is optional. The Sony SL-250 is a SuperBeta VCR with a 6-event/7-day timer, fast forward, and an infrared remote control. The deck is not portable, but can be hooked to an AC/DC converter to run off DC power. **Total price: \$689.**

—L. Kesten

Let's Get Digital



By Roderick Woodcock

Newly Enhanced VCRs Offer Novel Effects And The Promise Of Digital Treats To Come

Imagine a cool autumn Sunday a couple of years from now. A World Series game's on NBC and a big football matchup's on CBS. Which to watch? Probably both, and on the same monitor, with baseball on the big screen and football on a smaller screen inset into the main picture. That's not all: You'll be able to switch the football game to the big screen when your team's on the goal line, and freeze the touchdown to study it more carefully. Or tape both games to watch later, when you can study Darryl Strawberry's home run swing frame-by-frame, in crystal-clear slow or fast motion (forward or reverse), or with a stroboscopic stop-motion effect. Tired of blue Astro-turf? Enhance different colors, or enlarge parts of the image for a checkerboard effect. You may even be able to zoom in on a fumble or print out a high-quality snapshot of Jim Kelly heaving a TD pass.

A wave of new digitally-enhanced VCRs can put most of these special effects at videophiles' fingertips today, and the rest in the not-too-distant future. A handful of digital-effect VCRs are on their way to stores, with so many more due to be introduced that RCA marketing director Joseph Clayton called digital this year's "buzzword" for VCRs.

Already or soon to be available are NEC's DX-1000U and DX-2000U, Toshiba's DX-3 and DX-7, RCA's VMT-400, JVC's HR-D570, and Hitachi's VT-1570A. (See this month's "Videotests" for a review of the DX-2000U, Jan. '87 for the DX-1000U and the DX-7, and Nov. '86 for the VMT-400.) Others from Toshiba, Sanyo, Panasonic, Quasar, Magnavox, and G.E. should also appear this year; some will probably have been announced by the time you read this. The VCRs aren't fully digital, but the elements that give them a range and quality conventional machines lack. That they offer different, only sometimes overlapping effects, shows that VCR makers are still probing for what consumers really want as the digital race heats up.

With digital technology coming on line a

piece at a time, each purchase of one of the new "digital" VCRs will be like a vote for its package of digital features. If all you want is digital freeze and slow motion, and you're not interested in MTS stereo or Hi-Fi, you can buy a relatively inexpensive machine like Toshiba's DX-3 for \$449. The step-up DX-7, for \$849, offers the same roster of digital special effects, but augments the VCR's overall performance with a four-head video cylinder, MTS stereo, and Hi-Fi sound.

NEC's DX-1000U and DX-2000U also eschew picture-in-picture, mosaic, and posterization effects in favor of a simple digital freeze, still, and 1/3 speed slow motion. (See sidebar for a guide to digital effects.) But the NEC models are the only two digital-effect VCRs, so far, that offer an adjustable digital noise reduction circuit to improve the appearance of noisy tapes during playback.

While RCA's VMT-400 is built for the company by Hitachi, and shares the same three-head transport used by the Hitachi VT-1570A, the RCA machine clearly has more sophisticated digital special effects. In addition to PIP, picture swap, freeze, still, and variable slow motion (all present on the Hitachi), the RCA sports the mosaic effect and posterization. But all these elaborate features are wrapped around a monaural machine, while the Hitachi has linear stereo (MTS) with Dolby noise reduction.

The most extensive digital-effects VCR so far is JVC's HR-D570. It offers freeze, still, frame advance, double-speed play, 1/4 and 1/8 slow motion, mosaic, and posterization. It also adds the strobe effect in a two-step mode that simulates a time-lapse effect onscreen. Non-digital highlights include a double-azimuth, four-head video drum, Hi-Fi stereo with MTS, and a versatile 181-channel direct access tuner.

Not all of the extra "digital" VCRs add to the watching of films and home tapes come in the form of improved special effects. In most, the digital circuitry is also used to improve the overall picture quality, and the viewability of pictures during searches. With digital signal processing, it's possible to obtain a clean and almost noisebar-free picture search at SP, even with a two-head VCR that normally delivers wider noisebars.

NEC's two digital-effect machines also use a noise reduction process that feeds the signal from a noisy tape, even one made on another machine, into digital enhancing circuitry to improve the onscreen picture. The range of enhancement varies from one to ten, with ten reserved for the noisiest tapes.

PIPS AND CHIPS

Digital-effect VCRs use versatile microprocessors to complement the signal processing circuitry of conventional analog machines. These chips convert the video signal into electrical pulses representing the numbers zero and one. These numbers form an accurate binary map of the video signal that can be used to reproduce the picture with no loss in quality. The map can also be altered with no damage to the original signal, allowing all sorts of enhancements and special effects.

The chips that store the digital information are known as DRAM, for Dynamic Random Access Memory. Most of the current VCRs with digital effects use DRAM chips that each hold 256 kilobytes of binary data.

RCA's VMT-400 has nine, arranged to provide sufficient memory to hold two separate fields of color video data. Two of the DRAMs are dedicated to the picture-in-picture feature, while six more are used as the main memory for the freeze, mosaic, and posterization (or "paintbrush") special effects. The last chip is used to process synchronizing signals.

When the picture-in-picture feature is selected, the video signal is divided into its color and black & white components and routed to a special circuit that converts the analog signals into binary data and stores them in the memory. Only part of the information is released, resulting in a picture one-twelfth the size of the original. This small digital picture is then re-converted to analog and superimposed on the screen.

Zeros and ones map out the signals for digital effects. Top to Bottom: RCA's VMT-400 offers PIP, mosaic, and posterization; Toshiba's DX-7 provides clear freezes, slow-mo, and search; NEC's DX-1000U digitally repairs noisy pictures.

Digital-Effect VCRs offer bonuses like PIP and picture swap, and enhance features like slow-motion and picture search.

A similar technique processes the other special effects. In the freeze mode, the video signal from one field is digitized and read out repeatedly. In slow motion, the picture for one digitized field is displayed repeatedly until the tape advances and the image is replaced by a newer one. For mosaic, the horizontal line rate of the video signal is repeated every six lines, and for each field, creating the blockish effect. Posterization is accomplished by withholding some of the data coming from the main memory, diminishing the luminance and resolution and creating the painted effect.

Current digital-effect VCRs, like computers, use memory chips, but aren't as sophisticated. While a computer stores and processes its information in the form of binary digits, the new VCRs only use the chips to obtain a range of special effects. Because of its digital format, a computer diskette can be copied any number of times, with the tenth, or even one-hundredth copy, identical to the first one.

That's not true of digital VCRs. They still record the video as an analog signal. Multiple generation copies of an original tape will still suffer losses in resolution and quality. VCRs that digitize all the video signal and record it on tape that way have yet to be introduced for the home video market, although, since they've recently

been announced for professional use, it's just a matter of time before an "all-digital" VHS or Beta machine appears.

THE NEXT WAVE

Virtually every major VCR manufacturer is readying some form of digital-effect VCR for introduction in 1987. Matsushita will have one that will appear under the Panasonic, Quasar, Magnavox, and G.E.

labels, among others. Its features may include a nine-window multi-screen, strobe display, mosaic, paintbrush, multi-speed slow motion, and some new form of timer programming as icing on the cake.

Sanyo's forthcoming machine may offer a one-third speed slow motion, still frame, and frame advance, as well as a one-ninth size PIP. Mitsubishi's will likely include a nine-screen stroboscopic display, color tone control, and mosaic. Toshiba, which introduced the first digital-effects VCR a year ago, is readying an update on its DX-7. A new model from Toshiba only available in Japan offers a four-window split-screen, onscreen programming using a light-pen (which you touch to your TV screen to initiate program commands), digital still, slow motion, and strobe.

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Digital Dictionary

Digital technology has opened up new vistas for consumers who like to play with special effects. Some of the digital techniques enhance effects already available on VCRs, but many of the effects will be totally new to home users. A guide to the most popular digital features follows:

Digital freeze isolates a frame from a tape and displays it as a still image indefinitely, even though the videotape continues to move ahead and the sound continues to pour out of the speaker. Since the still frame is not produced directly from the videotape, there's no abnormal wear and tear on either the

tape or the video heads.

Digital still converts the information from a single video field (the diagonal track left by one video head on the tape) from analog to digital, and displays it onscreen as a rock-steady still picture. The forward motion of the tape is stopped, and the video heads continue to scan its surface. A technique called "digital interpolation" builds a complete TV frame out of the single field grabbed off the tape. Since the digital still is an all-electronic image, there's none of the delay common with conventional special-effect VCRs, which have to jog the

continued on page 114

Digital-Effect VCRs: The First Wave

Brand, Model, Price	Video Heads	Audio Features ¹	Tuner, Timer ²	Digital Effects ³	Other Features ⁵
NEC DX-1000U \$699	2 record/play	M	110 ch. 4/21	FF, SF, FA, 1/3x SM, NR	OSP, remote eject, OTR, unified remote, 2-speed search
NEC DX-2000U n.a. ⁴	2 record/play	HF, D, MTS	110 ch. 4/21	FF, SF, FA, 1/3x SM, NR	OSP, remote eject, OTR, unified remote, 3 A/V line inputs, 2-speed search
Toshiba DX-3 \$449	2 record/play	M	117 ch. 4/7	FF, SF, 2x FP, 1/4x SM	program index, locking picture search, OTR, auto power on, edit switch
Toshiba DX-7 \$849	4 record/play	HF, MTS	117 ch. 4/7	FF, SF, 2x FP, 1/4x SM	program index, locking picture search, OTR, auto power on, edit switch
RCA VMT-400 n.a. ⁴	2 record/play 1 effects	M	119 ch. 4/365	FF, SF, FA, PIP, PSw, 1/5-1/30x SM, M, P	OSP, auto programming, express record, auto rewind
JVC HR-D570 \$1050	4 record/play	HF, MTS	181 ch. 8/14	FF, SF, FA, 2x FP, M, 1/4 & 1/8x SM, P, Pst	image edit, music scan, switchable AC outlet on timer, digital sharpness control
Hitachi VT-1570A n.a. ⁴	2 record/play 1 effects	D, MTS	119 ch. 4/14	FF, SF, FA, 2x FP, 1/5-1/30x SM, PIP, PSw	OSP, OTR, unified remote

¹M, mono audio; HF, Hi-Fi; D, Dolby stereo; MTS, multichannel television sound stereo. ²Events/days. ³FF, freeze frame; SF, still frame; FA, frame advance; FP, fast play; SM, slow motion; M, mosaic; P, posterization; PIP, picture-in-picture; PSw, picture swap; Pst, picture strobe; NR, digital noise reduction. ⁴Not available; prices may vary from dealer to dealer. ⁵OSP, onscreen programming; OTR, one-touch record.



He was half man.

Half insect.

And completely terrifying.

A brilliant experiment goes slightly wrong in this update of the horror classic.

Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis star in this scary, suspenseful tale about a man who is transformed into an insect. Both a love story and an intense drama, *The Fly* boasts sizzling special effects that create a nightmarish film you'll never forget.

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Part II: Beta

1987 Blank Tape Tests

Complete Guide to 54 Brands and Grades

Though Beta's portion of the rough-and-tumble VCR market continues to contract, tape makers have remained as loyal to the format as fervent videophiles. There's no shortage of blank Beta brands or grades. But the really good news is less Beta's availability than that the tapes of all Beta manufacturers have gotten better in the past two years.

In the 54 Beta tape tests that follow, it's clear there's an increasing emphasis on quality, a finding that parallels the results in our report last month on 67 VHS tests. (Next month, we'll conclude this series with tests on Compact VHS and 8mm tapes.)

Although no single Beta tape is best at everything, a few tapes come closest to perfection. These are top grade tapes that carry premium prices. In alphabetical order, they are Fuji Super HG Hi-Fi L-500, Konica Super Pro L-500, Maxell RX Pro L-500, Scotch EXG Pro L-750, Sony Pro-X L-500, and TDK HD Pro L-750.

Each has slightly different strengths and weaknesses, so between even these you should choose with care. One of our favorites is missing from the above list because the manufacturer failed to provide samples. The tape is Fuji Super HG H351 L-500. We are so confident about its performance that, if you find any, it is certainly worth trying.

Among the more modestly priced tapes that performed well are TDK E-HG L-750, Sony ESX-HiFi L-750 and ES-HG L-750, Scotch EXG Camera, Maxell HGX Gold L-750, Kodak XHG L-750, and Fuji Super HG Hi-Fi L-750. Note that some may have significant weaknesses in one area.

Clearly, not all Beta is created equal. In the following paragraphs, we'll get into just how Beta tapes have improved, some of the differences between tapes, their importance, and some features, like SuperBeta, that appeared since our last tests.

In VIDEO's first blank tape tests, in October, 1982, the worst tape had more than



CONSTRUCTION BY AJIN PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT LEWIS

Next Month: Part III Compact VHS & 8mm

37 15-microsecond dropouts per minute. About half the tapes had above 27 dropouts per minute. In our March, 1985 Beta tape tests, the average number of 15-microsecond dropouts was 16.1 per minute. In this year's tests, the average is down to 13.7 per minute.

There have been similar gains in the signal-to-noise ratios for the video, chroma AM, chroma PM, and audio parts of the signal. Audio frequency response on the linear track and the output loss also improved. However, output loss was measured at 2 megahertz instead of 3 MHz, and

all the gains were on the low end of the audio frequency response.

We measured the audio frequency response on the Hi-Fi track and found the difference between tapes so small that we no longer consider the results a useful criteria for differentiating between tapes. However, there was a small difference between the tapes' dynamic range on the Hi-Fi tracks, a difference that parallels our measurements of the two chroma S/N figures. If you still want to compare the tapes' Hi-Fi tracks, it's better to use the chroma numbers. But the differences seem too small to hear.

SURFACE TREATMENTS

This illustrates how tapes in general are nearing theoretical perfection. As they close in, further improvements will become more difficult. The biggest improvements seem to come from modifications of the format like SuperBeta, and HQ for VHS. Judging from the rate at which advances are taking place, the most promise may lie in 8mm which, like a small child, seems to be growing faster than the more mature formats.

New format features like SuperBeta go hand in hand with improvements made on tape itself. The improvements come mainly from finer tape particles and from processing changes that more evenly apply the magnetic pigment on the base film. These, in turn, lead to lower dropout counts and higher signal-to-noise ratios.

Unlike VHS Hi-Fi, there is no special need to add abrasives to Beta Hi-Fi formulations because the Hi-Fi signal is mixed on the tape surface with the video signal, rather than buried below it deep in the tape. Also, Beta VCRs do not use separate video heads that add to the wear on the tape.

Video professionals use Betacam camcorders and tapes that use the same cassette as consumer-grade Beta. While it is possible to get a picture using a Betacam cassette, it is not recommended. Betacam

By Lancelot Braithwaite

tape is metal particle, not metal oxide, and the metal will cause premature wear of the video heads on a consumer machine. The signals will also be affected because metal tape requires different bias and equalization than oxide tape.

One of the most frequently asked questions about Beta tapes is: aren't they the same as VHS? According to Sony, the format licensor, they shouldn't be. For example, the luminance signal for standard Beta is recorded at a higher frequency than VHS. Sony's 2000 series Beta machines record at an even higher frequency. SuperBeta is recorded at a yet higher frequency, and the new High Band SuperBeta is recorded at a frequency 1.2 megahertz higher than the original Beta. In short, Beta VCRs require a tape with a wider frequency response than VHS machines. Though maintaining a separate tape stock for Beta tape is expensive unless a manufacturer has a large market, Sony says it definitely uses a different formulation for Beta tapes.

GRADE EXPECTATIONS

Another question we often hear is whether there really is any difference between grades of tape or between the formulas used to make the grades. All the manufacturers we talked to insist that the formulas and processes used to make the various grades significantly differ. But, even if we doubted them, our tests show distinct performance differences between grades—and both picture and sound quality seem to improve with step-up grades.

However, the differences may not always be as big as you might imagine. That's why you should try a top grade tape at least once. Ask yourself, your family, and friends if the differences are noticeable, and compare the differences in cost.

You may decide on a middle grade for general taping, and reserve the best grades for special occasions. Of course, if cost is not a factor there's no reason not to use only "the best."

No matter what the condition of your pocketbook, try different brands when you get a new VCR. Each VCR manufacturer uses a particular tape to align its machines

or at least set the specifications at the factory. This means that machines seem to exhibit a preference for a specific brand. You'll probably find that one brand seems to give slightly better pictures than the others. It is not your eyes playing tricks. It is probably the brand the VCR manufacturer used in its plant during the deck's design

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How to Use the Beta Tape Chart

The chart on the next four pages, and the evaluations that follow, are to help you pick the Beta tape that's best for you, and to better understand the differences between products that seem alike.

Before working with the chart—which leaves blank spaces for your own ratings—think about what you'll be using the tape for and the characteristics that seem most important. If dropouts are likely to cause a bigger problem than graininess, pay more attention to the "Dropout Count" column. If good

audio is a must, look closely at those columns. Many of today's top machines use a Hi-Fi recording system that will even let you ignore the linear audio track characteristics we measured. (Hi-Fi tracks are more like video tracks.)

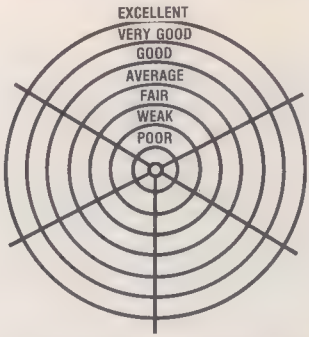
If you're enough of a videophile to try various tapes, we've set up the chart to allow you to record your own blank Beta tape experiences. We suggest you clip the chart and keep it in a folder. You may also want to photocopy the chart and use the copies as worksheets. As you experiment with different tapes, you can record your performance impressions (or measurements, if you're so equipped) in the columns provided.

Here's how to use the chart: Simply rate the tapes by writing letter grades or numbers in the blank columns. If you use letters, count up, at the end of each row, the number of excellents, very goods, goods, etc. each tape receives. You can cover your personal preferences in tape quality by adding or dropping a grade on the ratings for the characteristics you value most.

Let's say we've rated a tape good on

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Rating Scale



Numerical Guide to the Beta Test Rating Scale

	Video S/N ¹	Chroma AM S/N ¹	Consistency Between Batches ¹	Chroma PM S/N ¹	Dropout Count	Audio S/N ¹	Audio Frequency Response ²
Excellent	over +0.7	over +1.5	0 to .1	over +0.7	0 to 5	over 53.5	40 to 12k
Very Good	+0.5 to +0.7	+1.0 to +1.5	0.2	+0.5 to +0.7	6 to 10	53.1 to 53.5	40 to 10k 50 to 12k
Good	+0.2 to +0.4	+0.4 to +0.9	0.3	+0.2 to +0.4	11 to 20	52.6 to 53.0	50 to 10k
Average	-0.1 to +0.1	-0.3 to +0.3	0.4	-0.1 to +0.1	21 to 30	52.1 to 52.5	63 to 10k 50 to 8k
Fair	-0.4 to -0.2	-0.9 to -0.4	0.5	-0.4 to -0.2	31 to 40	51.6 to 52.0	63 to 8k
Weak	-0.7 to -0.5	-1.5 to -1.0	0.6	-0.7 to -0.5	41 to 50	51.1 to 51.5	50 to 6.3k
Poor	under -0.7	under -1.5	over 0.6	under -0.7	over 50	under 51.1	63 to 6.3k

Tape Tests

Brand Grade, Length ¹	Video S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Consis- tency ³	Our Rating	Your Rating	Chroma AM S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Chroma PM S/N ²	Our Rating
FUJI											
Std. L-500	-0.3	F		0.0	E		-0.4	F		-0.3	P
Std. L-750	-0.1	A		0.1	E		+0.3	A		-0.1	F
Super HG L-750	-0.1	A		0.3	G		+0.8	G		0.0	A
Super HG Hi-Fi L-500	+0.9	E		0.2	V		+1.9	E		+0.3	E
Super HG Hi-Fi L-750	+0.3	G		1.1	P		+1.0	V		+0.1	G
KODAK											
Std. L-500	-0.6	W		0.4	A		+0.1	A		-0.1	F
Std. L-750	-0.6	W		0.2	V		-0.1	A		-0.1	F
XHG L-500	+1.3	E		—	—		+1.8	E		-0.1	F
XHG L-750	+0.4	G		0.1	E		+1.2	V		+1.0	G
XHG L-830	+0.5	V		0.2	V		+1.1	V		+0.2	V
Hi-Fi L-750	+0.5	V		0.4	A		+1.3	V		+0.2	V
KONICA											
High Perf. Std. L-500	-0.4	F		—	—		-0.3	A		-0.5	P
High Perf. Std. L-750	-1.2	P		0.6	W		-0.4	F		-0.3	P
Super HG L-750	-0.2	F		1.0	P		+0.7	G		+0.1	G
Super Hi-Fi L-750	+0.1	A		0.1	E		+0.5	G		-0.1	F
Super Pro L-500	+0.4	G		0.2	V		+0.8	G		0	A
MAXELL											
EX L-500	-0.7	W		0.2	V		-0.1	A		-0.2	W
EX L-750	-0.1	A		0.4	A		+0.6	G		+0.1	G
HGX L-500	+0.5	V		0.4	A		+1.1	V		0	A
HGX L-750	+0.3	G		0.3	G		+1.1	V		+0.3	E
HGX L-830	-0.3	F		0.3	G		+0.8	G		0	A
Hi-Fi HGX L-500	+0.5	V		0.4	A		+1.2	V		+0.2	V
Hi-Fi HGX L-750	+0.2	G		0.3	G		+0.9	G		+0.1	G
RX Pro L-500	+0.8	E		0.3	G		+1.6	E		+0.1	G
MEMOREX											
Std. L-750	-0.7	W		0.3	G		-0.4	F		-0.3	P
High Grade L-750	-0.1	A		0.4	A		+0.8	G		0	A
POLAROID											
Std. L-750	-1.0	P		0.2	V		-0.8	F		-0.6	P
High Grade L-750	-0.1	A		0.8	P		+0.4	G		-0.2	W
RCA											
Stereo Hi-Fi L-500	0	A		0.1	E		+0.2	A		+0.1	G
Std. L-750	0	A		0.4	A		+0.7	G		0	A
SHG L-750	+0.5	V		0.1	E		+1.1	V		0	A
SCOTCH											
EG L-500	-0.1	A		0.4	A		-0.7	F		+0.2	V
EG L-750	-0.1	A		0.2	V		+0.2	A		+0.4	E
EG + L-750	0	A		0.8	P		+0.1	A		+0.2	V
EXG L-750	+0.6	V		0.2	V		+0.9	G		+0.4	E

¹Approximate recording times at BII speed: L-500, 2 hrs.; L-750, 3 hrs.; L-830, 4 hrs., 20 min. ²S/N: signal-to-noise ratio, in decibels. ³Between batches of

Tape Tests

Your Rating	Dropout Count ⁴	Our Rating	Your Rating	Output Loss at 2 MHz ⁵	Your Rating	Audio S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Audio Frequency Response ⁶	Our Rating	Your Rating	Your Cost	Your Rating	Your Rating Totals
	9/13/31	V		-1.9		53.2	V		63-10k	A				
	16/37/48	G		-1.5		53.1	V		50-12k	V				
	21/27/41	A		-1.7		52.8	G		50-8k	A				
	7/8/27	V		-2.4		52.4	A		50-8k	A				
	3/11/20	E		-2.3		52.7	G		50-10k	G				
	22/37/51	A		-2.8		52.1	A		50-10k	G				
	17/26/37	G		-1.5		51.8	F		40-10k	V				
	11/19/41	G		-2.4		52.7	G		63-10k	A				
	16/31/42	G		-2.3		52.4	A		50-8k	A				
	24/27/40	A		-2.3		51.0	P		50-10k	G				
	8/23/32	V		-2.2		52.3	A		50-8k	A				
	18/24/42	G		-1.8		52.2	A		50-10k	G				
	11/13/18	G		-1.1		52.9	G		40-10k	V				
	28/35/41	A		-1.3		52.8	G		63-10k	A				
	13/22/35	G		-0.8		52.1	A		63-10k	A				
	4/5/9	E		-1.9		52.7	G		40-10k	V				
	7/12/15	V		-0.7		51.6	F		50-12k	V				
	32/39/57	F		-1.3		51.8	A		63-10k	A				
	28/38/62	A		-2.0		52.8	G		63-10k	A				
	8/13/34	V		-1.7		52.5	A		50-6.3k	W				
	14/16/23	G		-1.1		52.4	A		50-10k	G				
	11/17/36	W		-1.7		52.7	G		63-10k	A				
	8/11/28	V		-1.6		53.2	V		63-10k	A				
	13/14/18	G		-2.0		52.6	G		50-10k	G				
	9/31/21	V		-2.2		52.8	G		40-10k	V				
	12/17/23	G		-2.2		53.6	E		63-10k	A				
	3/3/6	E		-0.6		52.6	G		50-8k	A				
	12/20/27	G		-1.9		52.4	A		50-12k	V				
	6/9/11	V		-1.8		52.4	A		50-10k	G				
	14/16/24	G		-2.2		52.1	A		50-8k	A				
	22/27/41	A		-2.2		52.7	G		50-8k	A				
	20/31/31	G		-2.6		51.7	F		63-10k	A				
	6/6/9	V		-1.9		51.4	W		63-10k	A				
	15/24/55	G		-2.4		52.2	A		50-10k	G				
	31/37/42	F		-2.4		51.8	F		63-10k	A				

blank tape. ⁴15 μ sec/10 μ sec/5 μ sec. ⁵In decibels. ⁶In Hertz. E, excellent; V, very good; G, good; A, average; F, fair; W, weak; P, poor.

Brand Grade, Length ¹	Video S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Consis- tency ³	Our Rating	Your Rating	Chroma AM S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Chroma PM S/N ²	Our Rating
SCOTCH											
EXG Hi-Fi L-750	+0.5	V		0.2	V		+1.0	V		+0.5	E
EXG Camera L-750	+0.6	V		0.3	G		+0.6	G		+0.3	E
EXG Pro L-750	+0.5	V		0.1	E		+0.3	A		+0.4	E
SKC											
SG L-500	-2.0	P		0.2	V		-1.5	W		-0.7	P
SG L-750	-1.1	P		0.3	G		-0.1	A		-0.5	P
SHG Hi-Fi L-750	-0.9	P		0.2	V		-0.3	A		-0.2	W
SONY											
Std. L-500	-0.7	W		0.2	V		-0.1	A		-0.2	W
Std. L-750	-0.5	W		0.3	G		+0.3	A		-0.1	F
Std. L-830	-0.8	P		0.4	A		+0.1	A		0	A
ES-HG L-500	0	A		0.3	G		+1.4	V		+0.4	E
ES-HG L-750	0	A		0.2	V		+0.9	G		+0.3	E
ES-HG L-830	-0.2	G		0.4	A		+0.3	A		+0.2	V
ESX Hi-Fi L-500	+0.9	E		0.3	G		+0.3	A		+0.3	E
ESX Hi-Fi L-750	+0.6	V		0.2	V		+0.8	G		+0.1	G
Pro-X L-500	+1.1	E		0.1	E		+0.6	G		+0.1	G
TDK											
HS L-750	-0.4	F		0.2	V		-0.2	A		-0.1	F
E-HG L-750	+0.7	V		0.3	G		+1.4	V		+0.1	G
Hi-Fi L-750	+0.6	V		0.3	G		+1.7	E		+0.3	E
HD Pro L-750	+1.0	E		0.2	V		+1.7	E		+0.3	E

¹Approximate recording times at BII speed: L-500, 2 hrs.; L-750, 3 hrs.; L-830, 4 hrs., 20 min. ²S/N: signal-to-noise ratio, in decibels. ³Between batches of

Using the Chart

continued from page 47

both dropouts and consistency, but you're thinking of using the tape only for timeshifting TV programs, and not for making or editing home videos. This would make the dropout count relatively more important, since you'll want as clear a picture as possible, and the consistency rating relatively less important, since you will not be mixing video shot on tapes from different production batches. In using the chart, therefore, you may wish to bump the dropout rating up to very good and the consistency rating down to average.

If you apply numbers, use the accompanying "Numerical Guide" or apply your own numbering system to our letter scale—1 to 7 for the grades is the simplest—and count the totals that way. Again, you can either use the higher end of our scale to reflect your preferences, or, if you're using your own numbers, weigh them to favor the characteristics most important to you. Write the figures in the columns for "Your Rating," add across indi-

vidual rows, and look for the highest numbers.

Since different video jobs ideally require different tapes, you may want to color code your ratings to reflect those that apply to tapes intended for camcorders, special Hi-Fi recordings, or simple timeshifting. Bear in mind that varying your criteria will change your results. For example, if low price is important you'll be focusing on a different group of tapes than if it were not.

You'll note we haven't included prices. In the real world of video stores, manufacturers' suggested prices mean next to nothing and actual selling prices vary enormously. You should check the prices in your area—through advertisements and the like—and add that information yourself.

If you're willing to spend a little time filling in the blanks, you'll be able to find the tapes that best suit your needs. There's a universe of tapes out there suitable for every conceivable kind of consumer use. But only you know the characteristics that will give you the kind of picture you like best.

—LB

What the Terms Mean

Audio Frequency Response is a measure of the range of frequencies reproduced by the tape and machine within 3 decibels of its output level at 1 kilohertz.

Audio S/N is a measure of how much noise affects the audio signal. It is noticeable as hiss. Since all tapes are tested under the same conditions, differences in S/N are caused by the tape.

Chroma AM S/N is a measure of the variation a tape causes in the color intensity of a field of a single color. The variations are caused by noise affecting the amplitude of the color signal responsible for intensity.

Chroma PM S/N is a measure of the variation in the hue or shade of a field of a single color. Hue variations are caused by noise affecting the phase relationship that determines the hue of a color picture. The tape, itself, can't

Tape Tests

Your Rating	Dropout Count ⁴	Our Rating	Your Rating	Output Loss at 2 MHz ⁵	Your Rating	Audio S/N ²	Our Rating	Your Rating	Audio Frequency Response ⁶	Our Rating	Your Rating	Your Cost	Your Rating	Your Rating Totals
	22/23/39	A		-2.4		51.7	F		50-10k	G				
	19/27/44	G		-2.8		52.7	G		63-10k	A				
	10/14/17	V		-2.6		52.3	A		40-12k	E				
	5/6/17	E		-0.8		52.6	G		63-8k	F				
	15/15/23	G		-1.4		52.7	G		63-10k	A				
	27/38/51	A		-1.2		52.2	A		50-10k	G				
	8/11/16	V		-1.8		52.7	G		50-10k	G				
	11/18/31	G		-2.0		52.4	A		50-12k	V				
	15/21/35	G		-2.2		52.1	A		63-10k	A				
	8/9/12	V		-2.1		52.3	A		50-10k	G				
	1/3/3	E		-2.1		52.8	G		63-10k	A				
	21/22/38	A		-1.7		52.2	A		50-10k	G				
	6/7/10	V		-2.4		51.7	F		50-10k	G				
	7/11/24	V		-2.5		52.7	G		63-10k	A				
	12/27/43	G		-3.3		51.3	A		50-10k	G				
	17/21/28	G		-1.7		52.2	A		50-10k	G				
	5/6/7	E		-2.9		51.6	F		63-10k	A				
	12/14/31	G		-2.2		52.3	A		50-10k	G				
	6/8/17	V		-2.8		52.8	G		63-10k	A				

blank tape. ⁴15µ sec/10µ sec/5µ sec. ⁵In decibels. ⁶In Hertz. E, excellent; V, very good; G, good; A, average; F, fair; W, weak; P, poor.

change a phase relationship. Yet, there is variation using the same machine for all tests. Some of the variation must come either from the tape or the cassette shell; we will continue to research its cause. It may turn out to be related to cassette design.

Consistency between batches, or dispersion, is the difference between the best and worst video S/N ratios measured for each type of videotape. It indicates the variations between batches introduced during their manufacture.

Dropout count is the number of portions of the video signal missing from the tape. The dropouts are caused by areas with too few magnetic particles—like a pothole—or by debris on the tape that momentarily separates the tape head from the tape surface—like a wheel going over a rock. In both cases, the head loses traction. Dropouts caused by debris disappear as the “rocks” are pulverized or knocked aside, so the dropout count lowers for the first 10 to 20 passes. Potholes, on

the other hand, may fill with debris, but eventually get larger as the tape dies.

We classify dropouts by the length in microseconds of the missing information. Over 15 microseconds (about a quarter the width of the screen for one line), they are large; between 10 and 15 microseconds, medium; and between 5 and 10 microseconds, they are small. All VCRs have compensation circuits to minimize their effect, but when dropouts show, you see annoying white or black streaks of noise.

Output loss at 2 megahertz is a measure of reproduction of picture detail. High frequency signals carry detail information but signals lose strength during recording due to the recording system, itself, and the tape. Measuring 2MHz output shows the tape's contribution to loss of detail in the picture.

Video S/N is a measure of the proportion of noise in the video signal. It looks like graininess or snowiness, and is one of the most annoying deficiencies in a video signal. If you're recording on

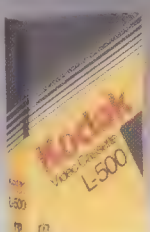
the Hi-Fi track, it is a reasonable indicator of the tape's contribution to noise in Hi-Fi audio.

The numerical data in the chart are in the units in which the characteristic is normally measured—in decibels for the S/N ratios, Hertz for audio frequency response, and in actual count for dropouts. Since the dispersion figure is a variation of numbers measured in decibels, it's in decibels too.

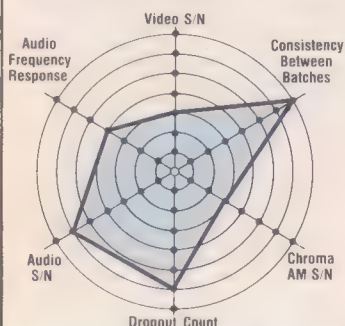
The figures for the dropout count, audio S/N, and audio frequency response were read directly off the measuring instruments. However, video S/N, chroma AM S/N, and chroma PM S/N are referenced to the mid point of the range of measured values. The circular graphs help you judge the balance between characteristics. The closer a graph's shape is to a hexagon, the closer the tape is to an all around high performer. You may want to add a column to the chart to take its shape into account.

—LB

Tape Tests

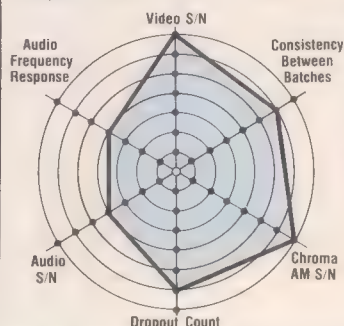


FUJI Standard L-500



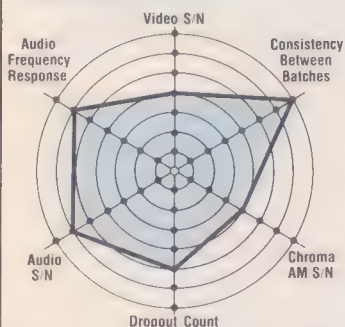
Fuji's basic grade of L-500 is an average tape overall with a little extra strength on the dropout counts, consistency, and audio S/N counterbalanced by slightly below average performance on video and chroma AM S/N. It is best suited for general purpose taping.

FUJI Super HG Hi-Fi L-500



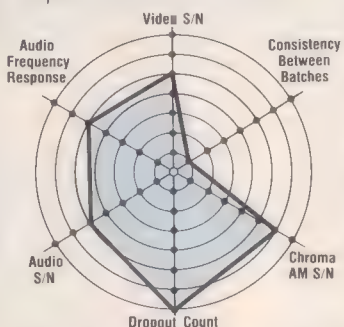
The thickness of Fuji Super HG Hi-Fi L-500 made it one of the better tapes we tested. Two ratings earned excellent, two very good, and two average. It may seem surprising that a tape called Hi-Fi would be only an average performer on audio, but those ratings are for the linear audio track. Audio performance on the Hi-Fi track was excellent.

FUJI Standard L-750



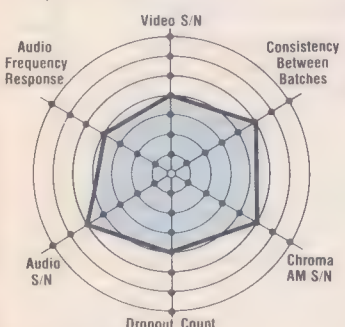
With L-750 thickness, Fuji's basic grade is an above average performer with strengths in consistency, dropout count, audio S/N, and audio frequency response. This makes it a better choice for a general purpose tape. It is usually much easier to find because L-750s seem to be the most popular and economical length among Beta tapes.

FUJI Super HG Hi-Fi L-750



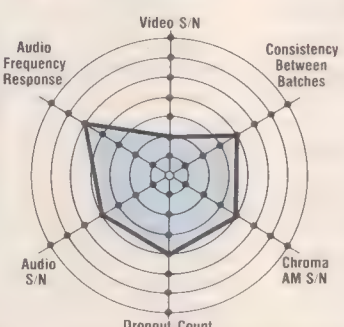
The thickness of Fuji Super HG Hi-Fi L-750 gave it an edge over the L-500 on the dropout count and on both linear audio measurements. But it rated worse on video and chroma S/N, and consistency. If you aren't editing between masters from different production batches (when consistency becomes a significant factor) it is a good to very good performer. One unusual sample was enough to throw the consistency reading way off.

FUJI Super HG L-750



Fuji's Super HG L-750 is a more balanced performer than Fuji's standard grade but a slightly lower performer than its basic grade of the same length. With three criteria rating average and three good, it is still an above average tape that is well suited for general recording.

KODAK Standard L-500



The thickness of Kodak's basic L-500 grade makes it an average performer with good audio frequency response, but weak video S/N. All its other characteristics are average. It is an acceptable general purpose tape.

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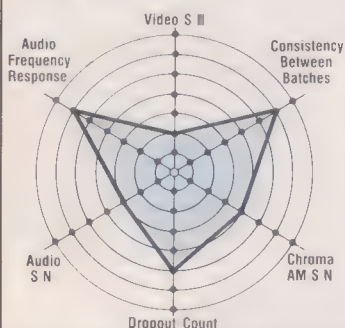
For additional information, circle No. 110 on Reader Service Card

Tape Tests



KODAK

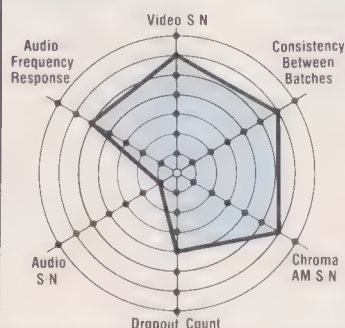
Standard L-750



The thickness of Kodak's basic L-750 tape grade has the same video and chroma AM S/N as the thicker L-500. It is better on consistency, the dropout count, and audio frequency response, but a smidgen weaker on audio S/N. It is another good general purpose tape. Of the two, the L-750 is more desirable.

KODAK

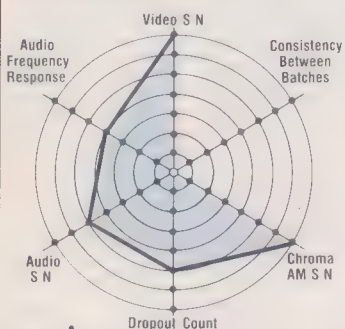
XHG L-830



Kodak XHG L-830 is very good on video S/N, consistency, and chroma AM S/N. Its linear track audio frequency response is good, and its dropout count is average. Its poor audio S/N is a serious minus only if you are using the linear track. Hi-Fi recordings, which are not affected by linear track characteristics, are very good.

KODAK

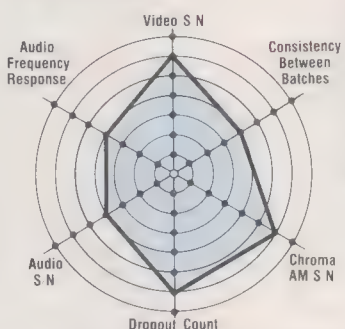
XHG L-500



Kodak's XHG L-500 is better than its basic grade on almost all criteria measured. Both video and chroma AM S/N are excellent. Although we measured four samples, all were from the same batch so we could not rate its consistency. Its dropout count and audio S/N were both good, and its frequency response was average. It is a strong performer overall.

KODAK

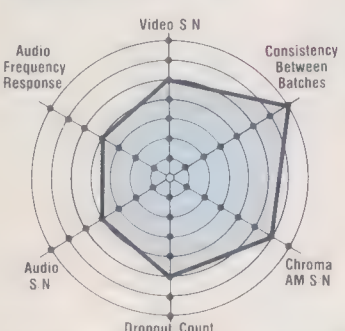
Hi-Fi L-750



Kodak Hi-Fi L-750 delivers a very good picture and earned a very good rating on the critical criteria of video S/N, chroma AM S/N, and the dropout count. Its remaining ratings of average affect linear track audio recording, and consistency between batches, a significant parameter only when editing masters. Overall, it is a good tape.

KODAK

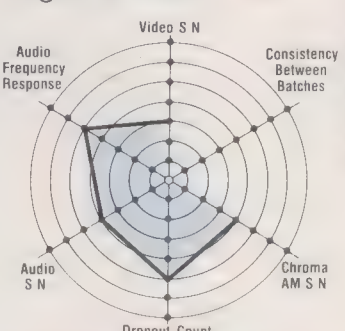
XHG L-750



The Kodak XHG L-750 was a rating point or two weaker on all the S/N ratios, but it was excellent on consistency between batches. Its rating of good on the dropout count and video S/N, plus its very good rating on chroma AM S/N, make it a good tape, though not as outstanding as the XHG L-500.

KONICA

High Perf. Std. L-500



Konica High Performance Standard L-500 is an above average tape with ratings of average on chroma AM S/N and audio S/N. Its dropout count and audio frequency response are both good, but its video S/N rating is just fair. We did not compute a rating for consistency between batches because all four samples measured were from the same batch.

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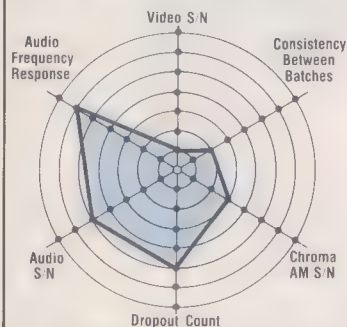


Tape Tests



KONICA

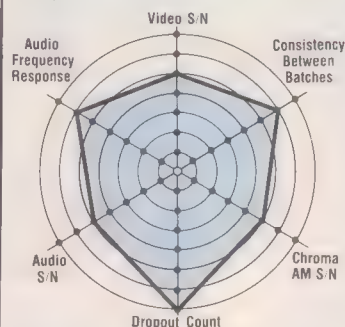
High Perf. Std. L-750



Konica High Performance Standard L-750 shows a good dropout count but its other video characteristics are disappointing. Video S/N is poor, consistency is weak, and chroma S/N is fair. Its audio characteristics are good on S/N, and very good on frequency response.

KONICA

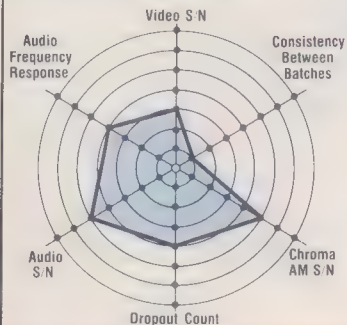
Super Pro L-500



Konica Super Pro L-500 was one of the outstanding samples in our test. It rated excellent on the dropout count, very good on consistency and audio frequency response, and good on all three S/N ratios. That makes it not only a very good performer, but a well balanced one, too.

KONICA

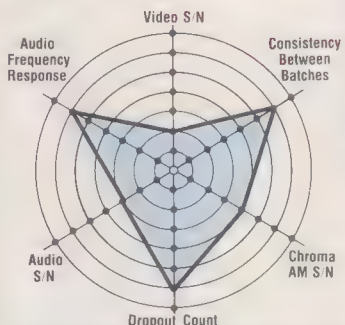
Super HG L-750



Konica Super HG L-750 is fair on video S/N and poor on consistency because one of the samples measured was much poorer than the others. It rated average on the dropout count and audio frequency response, and good on chroma AM S/N and audio S/N. Except for the one weak sample, it is an above average tape.

MAXELL

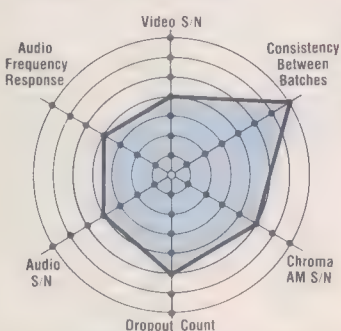
EX L-500



Maxell EX L-500 is a mixed performer with three ratings of very good, two of average and one of fair. On the video side, the dropout count and consistency are very good, video S/N is just fair, and chroma AM S/N is average. On linear audio, a very good frequency response is coupled with an average S/N. A single overall comment would be misleading.

KONICA

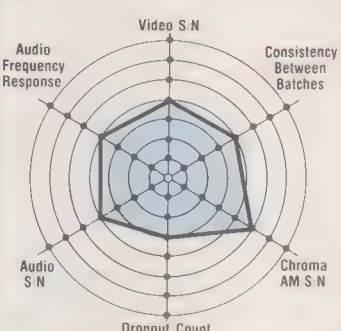
Super Hi-Fi L-750



Konica Super Hi-Fi L-750 is excellent on consistency between batches and good on dropout count and chroma AM S/N. Its other ratings are average. So it may be seen as good on video characteristics and average on linear audio performance.

MAXELL

EX L-750



Maxell EX L-750 is an average performer overall with ratings of average on video S/N, consistency, audio S/N, and audio frequency response. They are balanced by a rating of good on chroma A/M S/N and fair on the dropout count.

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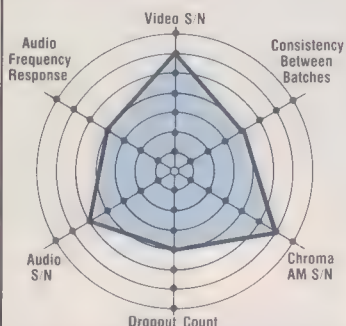
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Tape Tests



MAXELL

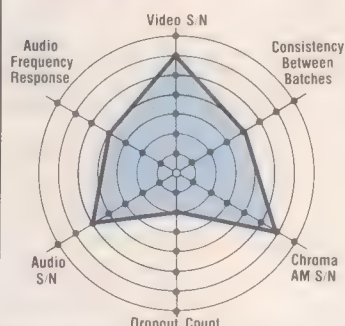
HGX L-500



Maxell HGX L-500 is an above average tape that earned ratings of very good for video S/N and chroma AM S/N, plus a good on audio S/N. Its three remaining ratings were average for consistency between batches, the dropout count, and audio frequency response. It is a solid step-up tape.

MAXELL

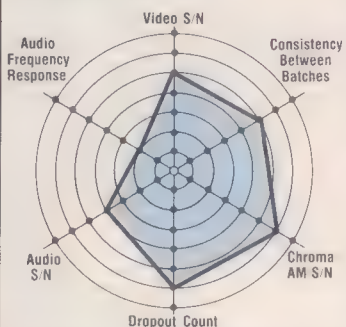
Hi-Fi HGX Gold L-500



Maxell Hi-Fi HGX Gold L-500 is average or better on all characteristics except its dropout count, which is weak. Video S/N and Chroma AM S/N are very good, and audio S/N is good. Audio frequency response and consistency between batches are both average. It is not as strong as some of the HGX grades.

MAXELL

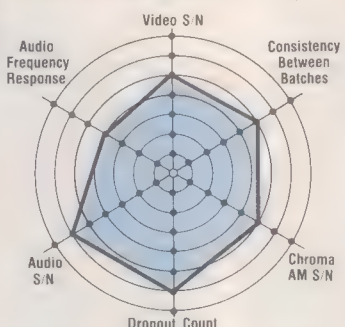
HGX L-750



Maxell HGX L-750 is better than its L-500 version in all areas except audio frequency response which was weak. It earned ratings of very good for the dropout count and chroma AM S/N and good on video S/N and consistency. Audio S/N was average. Overall video is good to very good. The linear audio is fair.

MAXELL

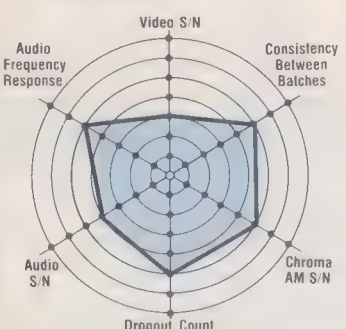
Hi-Fi HGX Gold L-750



Maxell Hi-Fi HGX Gold L-750 is a distinct step up from the HGX series with two ratings of very good and four of good. It is very good on the dropout count and audio S/N. All its other ratings are good, so its overall rating is good to very good.

MAXELL

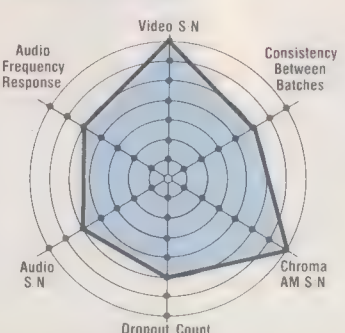
HGX L-830



Maxell HGX L-830 is the weakest of the HGX series but it still managed to earn four ratings of good for consistency, chroma AM S/N, the dropout count, and audio frequency response. Audio S/N was average and video S/N was fair. As thin L-830 tapes go, it is a strong performer.

MAXELL

RX Pro L-500



Maxell RX Pro L-500 is a small step up from the HGX Gold L-750. It, too, has four ratings of good, but its other two ratings are excellent instead of very good. The excellent ratings are for video S/N and chroma AM S/N. It rated good on consistency, the dropout count, audio S/N, and audio frequency response. We call it very good overall.

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timepieces, offering the precision accuracy for which the Swiss and Japanese are famous. All of these high quality watches have crystals made of scratch-resistant mineral glass and genuine leather wrist straps. Some styles are handsomely casual while others are more elegantly appointed with gold accents or a black chablon at the crown. All styles come with a one-year warranty and are completely guaranteed.



Reproduction of the classic moonphase watch. Gold moon of the watch moves in complete synchronization with Earth's Moon on its 28-day cycle. Classic Roman dial with sweep second hand. Man's style has calendar-date window. Woman's has a lunar-date window.

#W1030 Man's; #W1031 Woman's; **\$69.00** (\$5.95)



Elegant ultra-thin dress watch. Dual-track dial etched with Roman numerals for hours and smaller Arabic numerals for minutes. Lustrous porcelain-like face. Black chablon accents crown. Sleek tapered hands. T-bar affixes genuine black lizard wrist strap.

#W1036 Man's; #W1037 Woman's **\$69.00** (\$5.95)



Handsome recreation of a turn-of-the-century European classic with precision quartz movement. Stylized black enamel Arabic numerals in an antique white face. Sweep second hand encircled separately at six o'clock. Honey-colored pigskin wrist strap.

#W1032 Man's; #W1033 Woman's **\$59.00** (\$5.95)



Two unisex looks recreated in classic styles. Retro tank with curved case molds to fit wrist. Separate second hand dial. Moonphase tank displays Moon's phases in lunar window. Both have honey-colored leather straps.

#W1038 Retro Tank **\$69.00** (\$5.95); #W1039 Moonphase Tank **\$79.00** (\$5.95)



Diver's watch is analog and digital. Analog has hour, minute and second hands. Digital has 12 and 24-hour time displays, chronometer, alarm, stopwatch, calendar with rotating bezel, and tachymeter. Water resistant to 150 ft. Durable "black chrome" plated matte finish.

#W1040 Diver's Watch; **\$39.00** (\$4.95)



Classic tank redefined in an elegant dress style with sculptured, two-tone, ultra-thin case. Black enamel Roman numerals on a white face. Gold accents at quarter hours. Sleek tapered hands. Black chablon accents crown. Rich Bordeaux-colored leather wrist strap.

#W1034 Man's; #W1035 Woman's; **\$69.00** (\$5.95)

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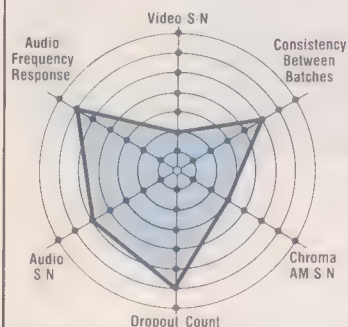
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MEMOREX

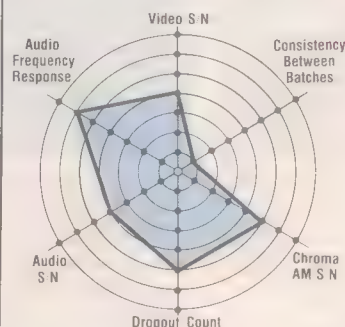
Standard L-750



Memorex Standard L-750 is weak on video S/N and fair on chroma AM S/N; very good on consistency between batches, the dropout count, and audio frequency response; and good on audio S/N. On video characteristics, it is average or slightly below. It is good to very good on linear audio performance.

POLAROID

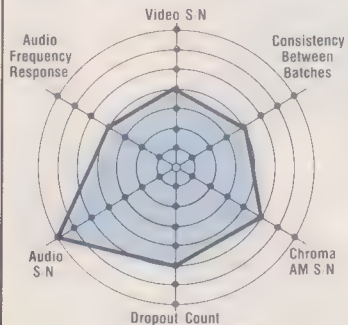
High Grade L-750



Polaroid High Grade L-750 is easy to characterize as above average—except for consistency, which is poor. The dropout count and chroma AM S/N are good, the video and audio S/N ratios are average, and the audio frequency response is very good. As long as you confine editing to the same tape or between masters on the same batch, it should be fine.

MEMOREX

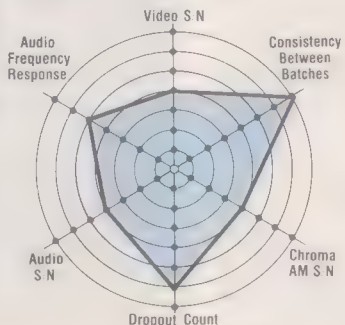
High Grade L-750



Memorex HG L-750 is distinctly better than Memorex's basic grade on video characteristics, with ratings of average on video S/N and consistency, plus ratings of good on chroma AM S/N and the dropout count. On audio, it is excellent on audio S/N and average on frequency response. Overall video performance is average to good. Audio performance is good.

RCA

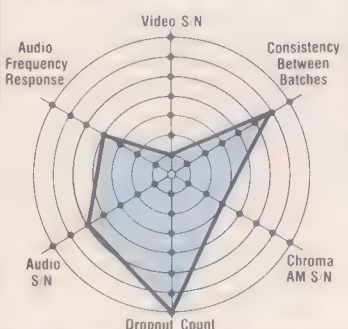
Stereo Hi-Fi L-500



RCA confuses us by calling this basic L-500 grade Stereo Hi-Fi. Stereo is purely a machine characteristic; however, we can accept calling a tape Hi-Fi if it has special smoothness, abrasivity or noise characteristics. This basic tape is an above average performer that is excellent on consistency, very good on the dropout count, and good on the audio frequency response.

POLAROID

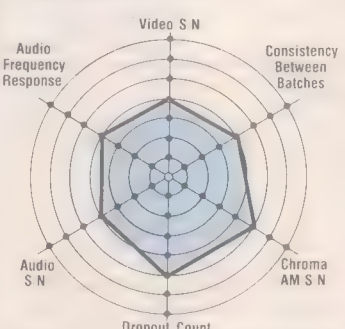
Standard L-750



Polaroid Standard L-750 is hard to characterize because it has one rating every step of the scale. The dropout count is excellent, consistency is very good, audio S/N is good, audio frequency response is average, chroma AM S/N is fair, video S/N is poor, and chroma PM is weak. Calling its overall performance average could be misleading.

RCA

Standard L-750



RCA Standard L-750 is an average performer on video S/N, consistency, audio S/N, and linear audio frequency response. Both the dropout count and chroma AM S/N are good. Overall, it is an above average performer.

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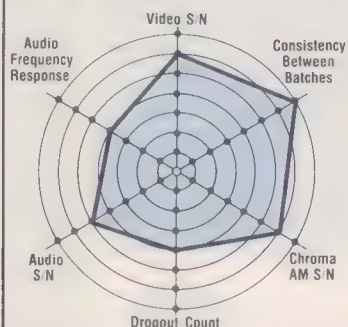
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Tape Tests

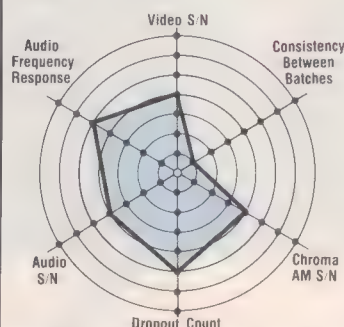


RCA SHG L-750



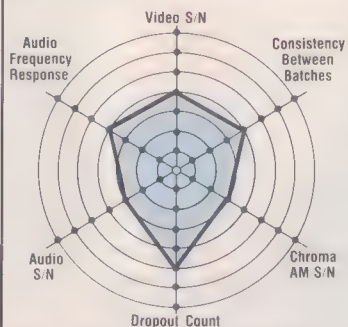
RCA SHG L-750 is definitely a step up tape with just two ratings of average—on the dropout count and on audio frequency response. Audio S/N is good, video S/N and chroma AM S/N are very good, and consistency between batches is excellent. In short, its strengths are in picture quality. If you are using Hi-Fi audio instead of linear, it is a very strong performer.

SCOTCH EG+ L-750



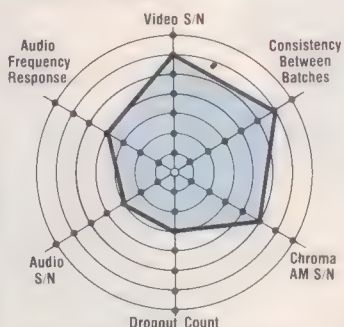
Scotch EG+ L-750 is average or above on all ratings except consistency, which was poor. Video S/N, Chroma AM S/N, and audio S/N are all average. The dropout count and audio frequency response are both rated good. Since consistency between batches affects only predictability and editing between masters on different batches, it's quite serviceable for non-critical applications.

SCOTCH EG L-500



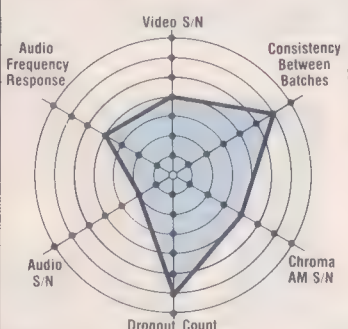
Scotch EG L-500 is a moderately well balanced tape only slightly below average. It has two ratings of fair, three of average, and one of good for the dropout count, always a plus. It earned average ratings on video S/N, consistency between batches, and audio frequency response. It was fair on chroma AM S/N and audio S/N.

SCOTCH EXG L-750



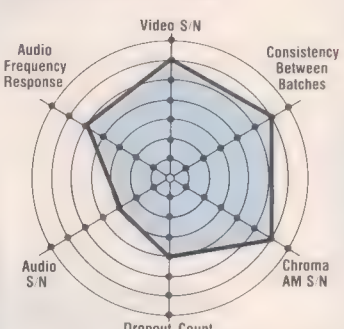
Scotch EXG L-750 is a step up on all video characteristics except the dropout count, which is fair. Video S/N and consistency are both very good and chroma AM S/N is good. Audio frequency response is average but audio S/N is fair, so it is below average for linear audio recording. Except for the dropout count, video performance is good.

SCOTCH EG L-750



The L-750 length of Scotch EG was a better performer than its L-500 counterpart, but with a weak rating on audio S/N. Audio frequency response and video S/N rated average—the same—but consistency and the dropout count improved to very good, and chroma AM S/N increased to average. Its overall rating is above average.

SCOTCH EXG Hi-Fi L-750



Scotch EXG Hi-Fi L-750 is a bit better than EXG on the dropout count, chroma AM S/N, and audio frequency response. Its video S/N, consistency, and chroma AM S/N are all very good. The audio frequency response is good, and the dropout count is average. Audio S/N is fair. Since you can ignore the linear audio characteristics when recording on the Hi-Fi tracks, it can be considered a good performer with more than ideal dropouts.

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CAROL BLACK and NEAL MARLENS Produced by STEVE TISCH Directed by STEVE MINER

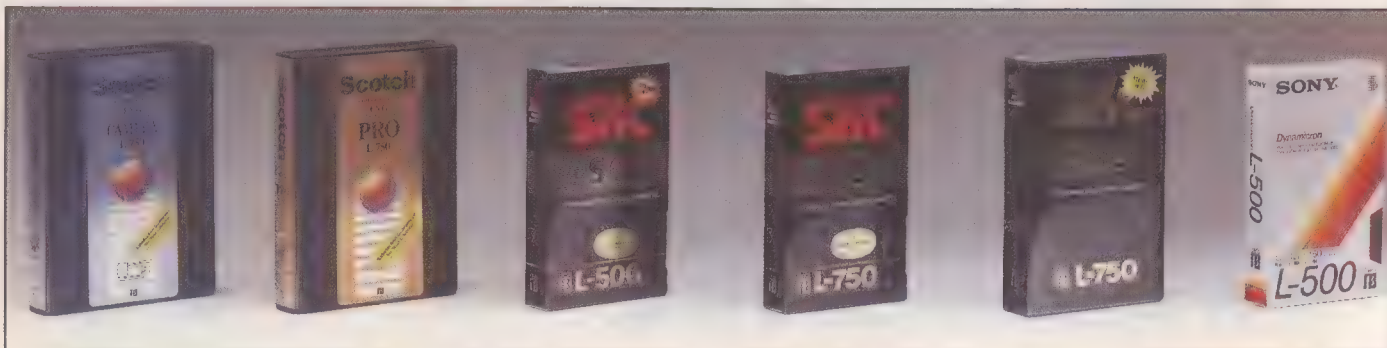


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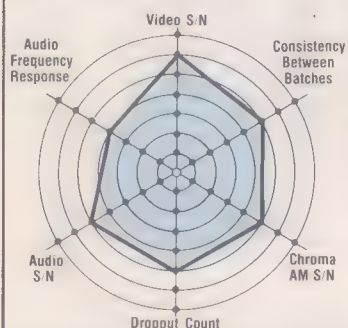
For additional information, circle No. 22 on Reader Service Card.

Tape Tests



SCOTCH

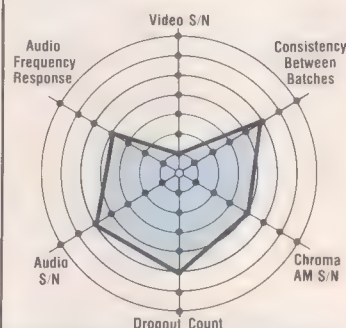
EXG Camera L-750



Scotch EXG Camera L-750 improves on the dropout count and audio S/N of the lower grades to earn a rating of good. The improvement in audio S/N is especially important because no portable Beta VCRs or camcorders have Hi-Fi capability. Chroma AM S/N and consistency are also good. Video S/N is very good. Its weakest rating is average on audio frequency response.

SKC

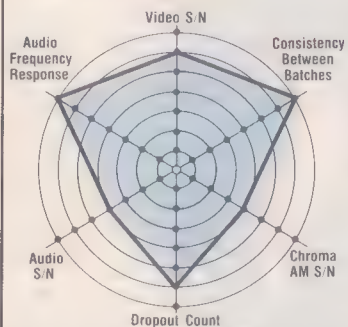
SG L-750



SKC SG L-750 is better balanced than the SG L-500, but it is poor on the critical video S/N measurement. It earned ratings of good on the dropout count, consistency, and audio S/N. It is average on chroma S/N and audio frequency response. It is no slouch except in that one area, which means somewhat noisier pictures than with other tapes.

SCOTCH

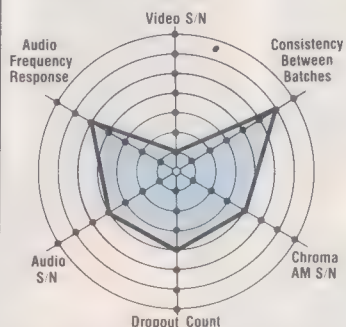
EXG Pro L-750



Scotch EXG Pro L-750 is a very good to excellent tape with some weakness in chroma AM S/N and audio S/N, which both rate average. Video S/N and the dropout count are both very good. Consistency between batches and audio frequency response are excellent. We recommend this tape for important recordings, even with a camera.

SKC

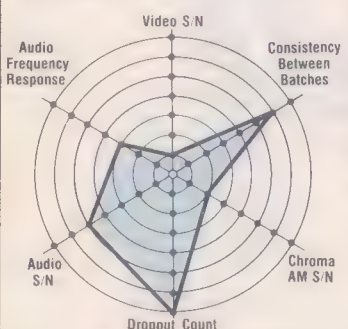
SHG Hi-Fi L-750



SKC SHG Hi-Fi L-750 is another reasonably balanced tape except for video S/N which remains poor. Its video S/N is definitely better than the previous two SKC tapes but not high enough to raise it a rating point. The dropout count, chroma AM S/N, and audio S/N are average. The audio frequency response is good and consistency is very good.

SKC

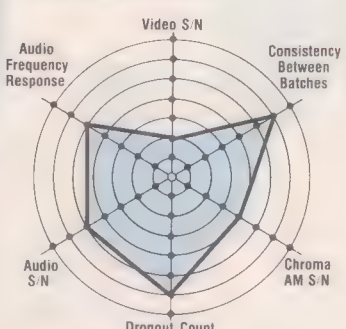
SG L-500



SKC SG L-500 is a tape with great strengths and great weaknesses. Dropout count is excellent; consistency between batches very good. Audio S/N is rated good. At the other end, the audio frequency response is fair, chroma AM S/N is weak, and video S/N is poor. Calling this tape average would be misleading, especially with serious weaknesses in video performance.

SONY

Standard L-500



Sony Standard L-500 is a better than average performer with weak video S/N. It is average on chroma AM S/N. Audio S/N and audio frequency response are both good, and dropout count and consistency are both very good. It is a good tape for recording from relatively noise-free sources.



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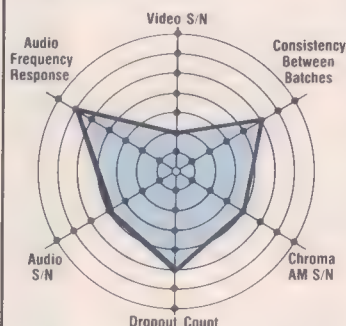
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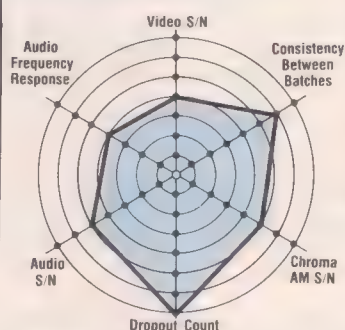


SONY Standard L-750



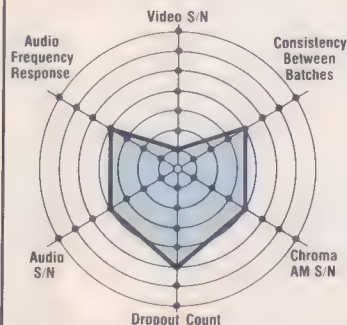
Sony's Standard L-750 is similar to its Standard L-500, but with the ratings stirred around. Video S/N is still weak. Audio S/N and chroma AM S/N are both average. Consistency and the dropout count are both good, and the audio frequency response is very good. Again, an above average tape with weak video S/N.

SONY ES-HG L-750



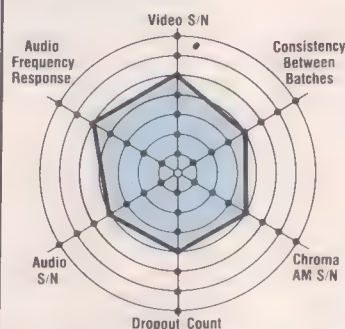
Sony ES-HG L-750 delivers increased performance on the dropout count, consistency, and audio S/N at the expense of audio frequency response and chroma AM S/N. The dropout count is excellent, consistency is good, and both the chroma AM S/N and audio S/N are good. Audio frequency response and video S/N are both average. It is another above average tape with slightly varied characteristics.

SONY Standard L-830



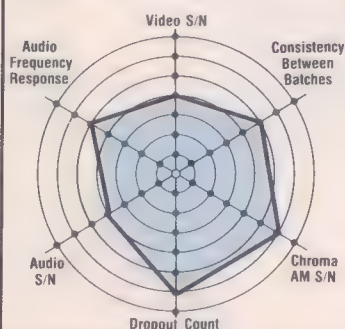
Sony Standard L-830 received ratings of average for consistency, chroma AM S/N, audio S/N, and audio frequency response. It is poor on video S/N, but it rated good on the dropout count. L-830 tapes are usually not star performers.

SONY ES-HG L-830



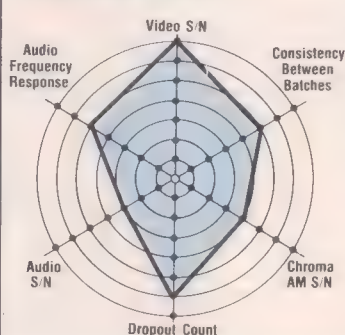
Sony ES-HG L-830 is a relatively well balanced tape with mostly average ratings. The dropout count, consistency, chroma AM S/N, and audio S/N all received grades of average. Video S/N and audio frequency response are good. It is a slightly above average tape best suited for general taping when you need extra capacity.

SONY ES-HG L-500



Sony ES-HG L-500 is a relatively well balanced tape with ratings of average on video and audio S/N. Consistency between batches and audio frequency response are both good, and the dropout count and chroma AM S/N are very good. Overall it is a good tape, and a bit stronger on its video performance.

SONY ESX Hi-Fi L-500



Sony ESX Hi-Fi L-500 shows step-up performance in the critical areas of video S/N and dropout count. Video S/N is excellent and dropout count is very good. Consistency between batches and audio frequency response are both good, while chroma AM S/N is average and audio S/N is fair. Its strengths outweigh its weaknesses, and it is strong enough on its video ratings to be called good to very good if you're not overly concerned with linear audio.

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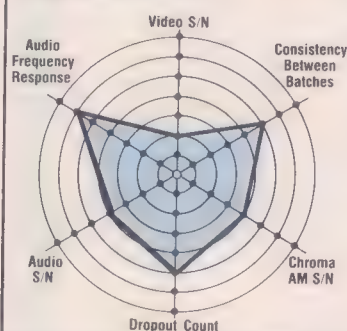
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Tape Tests

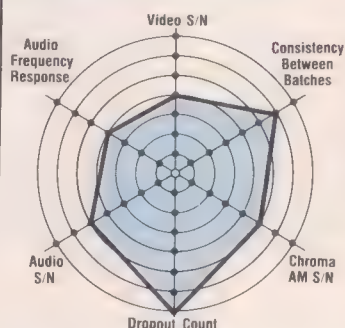


SONY Standard L-750



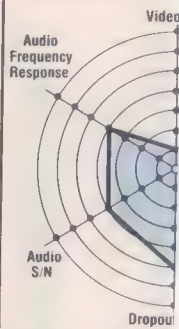
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SONY ES-HG L-750



Sony ES-HG L-750 delivers increased performance on the dropout count, consistency, and audio S/N at the expense of audio frequency response and chroma AM S/N. The dropout count is excellent, consistency is good, and both the chroma AM S/N and audio S/N are good. Audio frequency response and video S/N are both average. It is another above average tape with slightly varied characteristics.

SONY Standard L-830



Sony Standard L-830 received ratings of average for consistency, chroma AM S/N, audio S/N, and

SONY ES-HG L-830

Sony ES-HG L-830 is a relatively well balanced tape with mostly average ratings. The dropout count,

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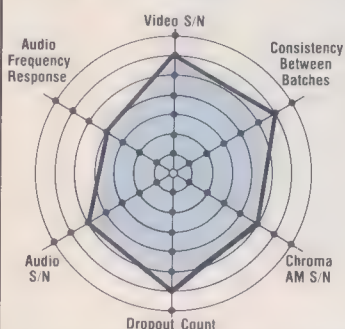


Tape Tests



SONY

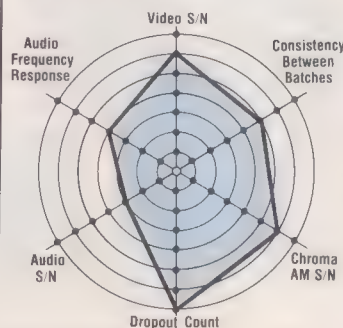
ESX Hi-Fi L-750



Sony ESX Hi-Fi L-500 shows step rating point on video S/N to become a stronger, better balanced tape. Video S/N, consistency, and the dropout count are all very good. Chroma AM S/N and audio S/N are rated good, and the linear audio frequency response is average. It is a strong performer.

TDK

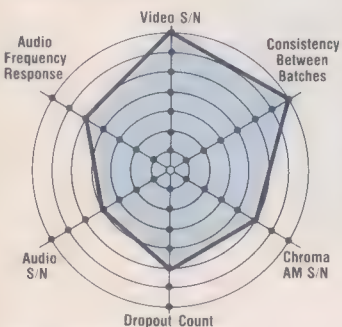
E-HG L-750



TDK E-HG L-750 is a stronger video performer than HS at the expense of the linear audio characteristics. The dropout count is excellent, video S/N and chroma AM S/N are very good, and consistency is good. It delivers very good video. However, the audio frequency response is just average and audio S/N is fair. It is great for applications when the audio is on the Hi-Fi track.

SONY

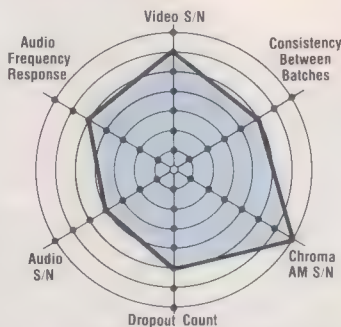
Pro-X L-500



Sony Pro-X L-500 increases the video S/N to excellent along with consistency, while giving up a point on the dropout count. The emphasis in this tape is definitely on picture quality, with ratings of good on chroma AM S/N and the dropout count to back up the two excellents. The compromise is on the linear audio, with an S/N of average and a frequency response of good. A very strong performer if you record Hi-Fi sound.

TDK

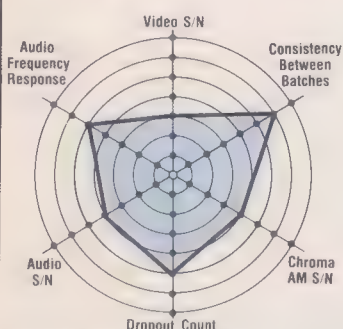
Hi-Fi L-750



TDK Hi-Fi L-750 is a bit better balanced than its E-HG, with gains on linear audio at the expense of video. Chroma AM S/N is excellent, video S/N is very good, and the dropout count and consistency are good. Video is good to very good overall. Audio S/N is average, and audio frequency response is good for a good to average linear audio performance.

TDK

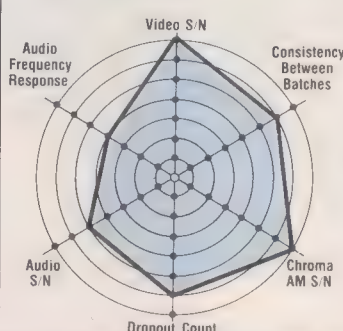
HS L-750



TDK's HS L-750 is its basic grade. It is an average performer overall, with a rating of very good on consistency. The dropout count and audio frequency response are both good, and audio S/N and chroma AM S/N are both average. Video S/N is just fair, but its other strengths redeem it.

TDK

HD Pro L-750



TDK HD Pro L-750 goes all out for picture quality and achieves ratings of excellent on video S/N and chroma AM S/N. The dropout count and consistency are both very good. Picture quality is excellent. Audio S/N is good and audio frequency response is average for above average linear audio. This is one of the outstanding tapes we tested.

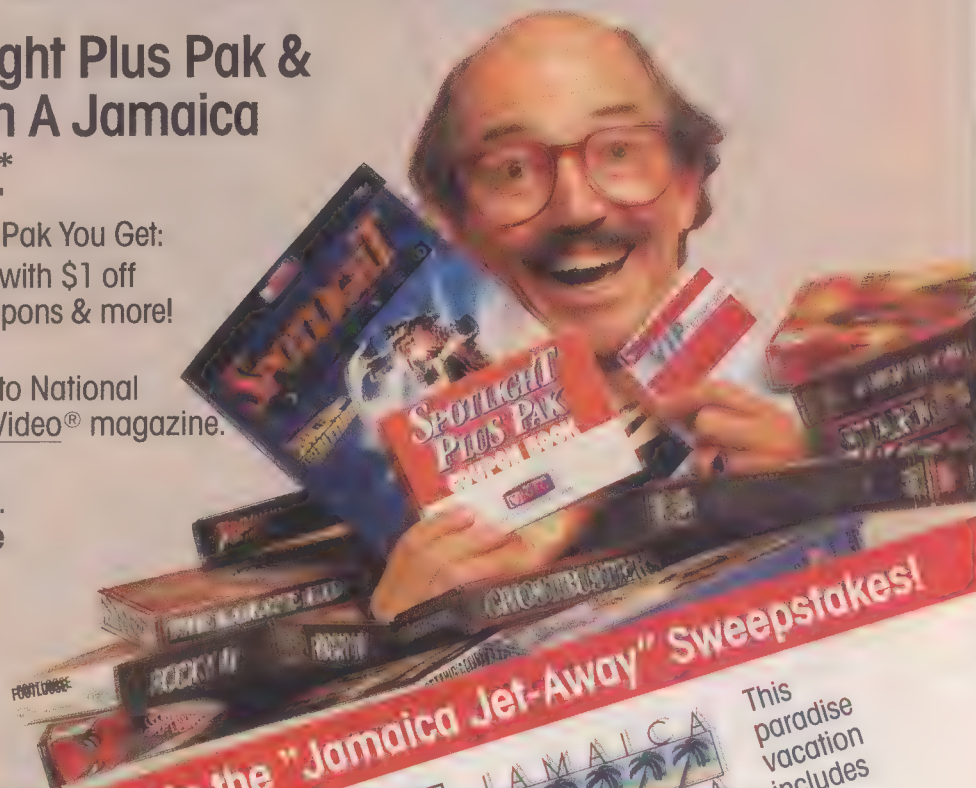
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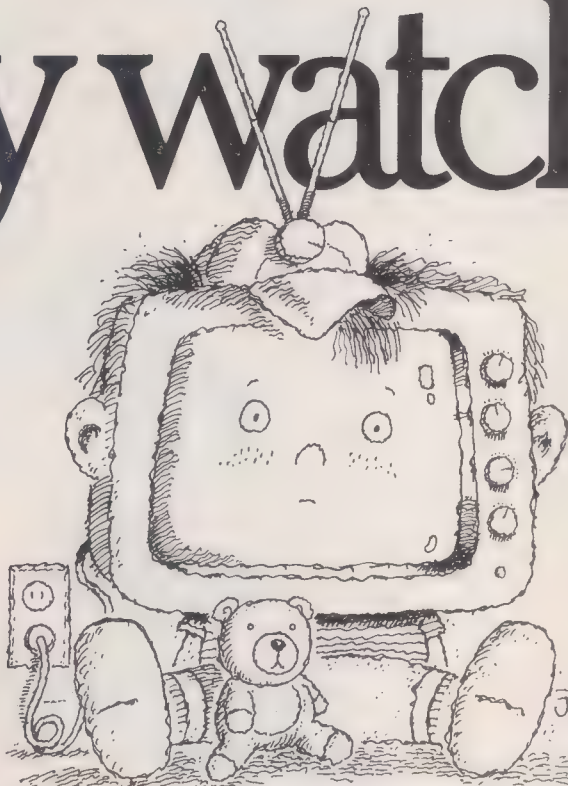


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NEWS AND VIEWS

BY MARK FLEISCHMANN

THE LIVING DEAD IN LIVING (?) COLOR

I think it's sort of silly," says George Romero of the colorized *Night of the Living Dead*, which is available for \$29.95 in the new version and \$14.95 in the original black & white. Roach Studios failed to respond to three requests by "News & Views" to send Romero a color copy of his movie, which he finally saw on television. "I'm just surprised there's an audience for it," he says.

Romero's objections hinge on "some basic story points." For instance, the film opens on a man and woman in a graveyard. They spy a wandering fellow who seems slightly deranged but otherwise harmless—until he attacks. This is the movie's first zombie violence but "the gag doesn't work," says Romero, "when the guy is green."

Romero "wouldn't have staged it the same way in color. Had it been intentionally shot in color, I think it would have been successful [anyway]. But you have to use the color as an element. That's the problem with computer color—it's not an aesthetic element, just an overlay. I didn't like it. The colors were weak."

It wasn't lack of funds that prompted Romero to go for the B&W look. He recalls, "We were about six or seven days into shooting when we found we could raise money on the basis of the dailies we were showing to people. At that point we talked about switching to color, but decided to stay with B&W for aesthetic reasons. It's better in B&W." For this squeamish viewer it wouldn't be viewable in color.

"I have a conviction about B&W," Romero continues. "When I was growing up, everything was in B&W. B&W came to mean something was more realistic or more important. For several years in the *Pillow Talk* era all the light stuff was color and serious films like *Judgment at Nuremberg* were intentionally B&W. That really has a lock on me."

Aesthetic convictions notwithstanding, Romero—currently working on a

script of *War of the Worlds* for Paramount—is an easygoing guy. No temperamental *auteur* he. "I'm not as militant about it as some of the other guys. I guess if I'd made *The Maltese Falcon*, I would be."

He's referring to the news conference held by ailing 80-year-old director/actor John Huston, who denounced Ted Turner's decision to colorize *The Maltese Falcon* and 99 other films, calling it "a conspiracy to degrade our national character...as great an impertinence as washing flesh tones on a da Vinci drawing." Huston's position has the endorsement of the Directors Guild of America, the Writers Guild of America (West), the Screen Actors Guild, the National Arts Council, the American Society of Cinematographers, and the American Film Institute. (Incidentally, CBS/Fox is releasing the colorized *Maltese Falcon* at \$59.98.)

Taking the opposite tack is the Motion Picture Association of America—the folks who tried to bring you VCR/tape taxes and are now pushing Macrovision. The producers argue that colorizing enhances a film's value in the marketplace, even to the point of warranting a fresh copyright on material hitherto in the public domain.

Ron Haver, curator of film at the L.A. County Museum of Art, also supports colorization, according to *The New York Times*, which quoted him noting the process requires the colorizers to strike "a pristine B&W print and a new negative if the original was on nitrate film." Anyway, he added, "Colorization isn't about film. It's video." Yeah, what the hell. *It's just video.*



Green zombies don't agree with director George Romero or vice versa.

Here's a proposal for Hollywood and our friends at Macrovision. How about a copy-protection scheme that would prevent the duplication of any B&W material in phony color? Apply it to all existing filmstock and videotape masters. Any attempt to apply synthetic color would result in annoying blinking, severe picture distortion, and (to borrow from Weird Al Yankovic) the spontaneous combustion of household pets—or better yet, corporate colorizers.

THE LASER IS MIGHTIER THAN THE TAPE

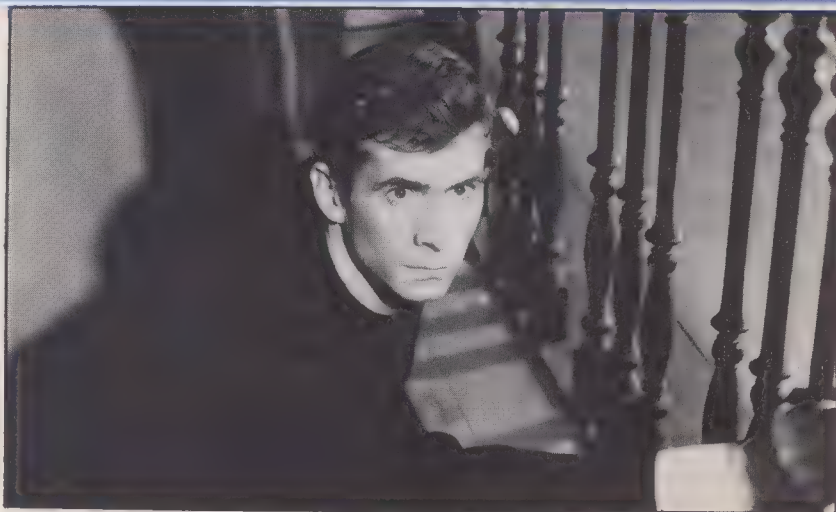
Everyone knows about discs' advantages over tape. Even people who don't own a LaserVision player have read about the format's higher picture quality and operational pluses. Not everyone, however, is aware that all LV releases are not created equal. LV discs are generally better than tape, but some offer more trimmings than others.



'The Bride' has her special effects on side 2.

Playing time is the key. Features as primary as noiseless still frame work only in the constant angular velocity (CAV) or standard-play mode—not in the constant linear velocity (CLV) or extended-play mode. CAV discs hold a maximum of 30 minutes per side; CLVs run up to 60 minutes. A CLV with digital sound added to the almost equally high-quality analog track shrinks that 60 minutes to 54.5.

Most deluxe laser releases use the CAV mode not only to exploit its roster of special effects, but as a means of including tantalizing codas. Criterion's *Citizen Kane* serves up still-frame pages of the shooting script to distinguish Orson Welles' visual flourishes from the original Herman Mankiewicz screenplay.



'The Birds' disc also contains the trailer for the original 'Psycho,' starring Anthony Perkins (above).

George Stevens' *Swing Time*, another Criterion disc set, contains an excerpt from a Bill "Bojangles" Robinson movie to illustrate one of Fred Astaire's prime influences as a dancer. Like many deluxe sets, both include generous volumes of stills shot on the set by studio photogs. *Swing Time's* analog stereo soundtrack also offers commentary by film historian John Mueller in one channel and the original mono soundtrack in the other.

Among the studio labels, MCA has taken the lead in deluxe disc releases. Four sides of MCA's three-disc boxed set of *Napoleon* are in CLV, but the fifth is in CAV. One chapter stop yields another still file; the second replays key scenes from the Abel Gance epic to be frozen or run in several grades of slow

motion on such players as the Pioneer CLD-909. MCA mastered *The Bride of Frankenstein* with side one in CLV and side two in CAV, so the special effects are available for the final third. The same is true of *The Mummy*, which has enough space at the end of the CAV side for a still collection and the original trailer.

MCA's disc of Alfred Hitchcock's *Saboteur* is all extended play, but a chapter stop reveals the film's trailer. Better still for trailer enthusiasts is the three-sided CLV set of *The Birds*. Three of the six trailers presented are of special historic interest: the ones for *Psycho* and *The Birds* star the director in his amusing raconteur mode, while *Rope's* consists of a full scene totally omitted from the film.

SCANLINES

I Am Joe's VCR: Remember the *Reader's Digest* "I Am Joe" series that told you more about how your body works than you could ever possibly want to know? Videotape versions of the documentaries are now available from Pyramid Film & Video (Box 1048, Santa Monica, Calif. 90406-1048). Newest installment is *I Am Joe's Ear*. Previous editions cover Joe's eye, heart, kidney, liver, lung, skin, spine, and stomach. At \$395 each, the tapes are for institutions rather than consumers, but you can always go for *National Geographic's* more modest *Incredible Human Machine*, a \$29.95 Vestron title.

Auteurs awake: MGM/UA's April Golden Jubilee titles will include the following for the reasonably collectible price of \$24.95: George Cukor's *Camille* with Greta Garbo and *A Woman's Face* with Joan Crawford, Vincente Minnelli's *The Clock* with Judy Garland, and King Vidor's *The Citadel*. In May, Fred Astaire sings Cole Porter in *Broadway Melody of 1940*.

Nixon nostalgists finally get their day in the sun with Media Home Entertainment's release of *Nasty Habits*, Michael Lindsay-Hogg's Watergate-in-a-convent spoof from 1977. It had been scheduled for earlier release but got hung up for awhile.

Beatles nostalgists should have gotten a little *Help!* from their friends at MPI by the time you read this. Problems in synching the digitally remastered soundtrack with the pix had delayed the 1965 Richard Lester film. MPI is also releasing an Allen Francovich documentary, *Inside the CIA: On Company Business*, chronicling the 1947-80 doings of those fine defenders of democracy.

Reviews

FILMS PRODUCED FOR THEATERS



Streep and Nicholson are the happy loving couple in 'Heartburn.'

HEARTBURN

1986. Meryl Streep, Jack Nicholson, Catherine O'Hara; dir. Mike Nichols. 109m. (R) Hi \$79.95. Paramount. Image: good.

Heartburn is calculated to appeal to one of our basest instincts—the illicit pleasure of snooping in someone else's diary. Only here veteran journalist Nora Ephron shares sordid episodes of her own life. Perhaps she wrote about her no-goodnik ex-husband for revenge. I can accept a good mudslinging session. Unfortunately, the mud (actually, a cream pie) doesn't only reach its target: it clings as well to the thinly disguised heroine.

Some years ago, Ephron married renowned Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein. During her second pregnancy, Ephron dumped him upon discovering he was having an affair. Her life became a novel called *Heartburn*, with the couple's names changed to Rachel Samstat and Mark Foreman. The film dutifully relates her woes in a series of vignettes, but expurgates the roiling emotions that must have dominated Ephron's life. Instead, we get what Helen Gurley Brown calls a "mouseburger," acted by Meryl

Streep, who rings false when she has to play weak. Waddling about with her hair unkempt—Rachel is pregnant for most of the movie—Streep expresses herself in a teeny, tiny voice that veers between happiness and misery. Joyous with her children, she is flat and unemotional the rest of the time, whether making love or being robbed at gunpoint.

Nicholson's Mark Foreman is a rat, and that's all. He talks sweetly out of one side of his mouth while cheating and acting like nothing's wrong. Faced with a poorly established image, Nicholson takes the easy way out—he plays Jack Nicholson. You anticipate every leer, every glower, every pained glance.

One must look to *Heartburn*'s smaller moments for satisfaction. Comedienne Catherine O'Hara dominates the screen as a gossip-mongering Southern belle who doesn't even realize she's twisting the knife. And a brilliant parody of *Masturbate Theater* puts Rachel's life into the soap opera context that was Ephron's starting point.

One wonders why Ephron was content to create an "I am nothing without a man" movie. After all, Rachel's editor holds her job open—through two preg-

nancies—and she does, eventually, choose independence. But there is so little joy in her decision it seems a resignation. To see this trait in so accomplished a woman made me crave a roll of Tums instead of the popcorn bowl.

—Toby Goldstein

CLUB PARADISE

1986. Robin Williams, Peter O'Toole, Jimmy Cliff, Twiggy, Rick Moranis; dir./co-wr. Harold Ramis. 96m. (PG-13) Hi St cc \$79.95. LV CX St cc \$34.98. Warner. Image: good.

Does this sound like a familiar plot? Stressed-out urbanite escapes to obscure Caribbean island for new way of life and finds a less-than-ideal vacation spot rife with its own problems. Pan-cultural adventures ensue; the story finishes with a local revolutionary insurrection. Rather than suffering *deja vu*, you may wonder exactly what differentiates *Club Paradise* from *Last Resort*, the mercilessly aggravating Charles Grodin vehicle recently reviewed here.

Happily, a densely populated world of talent and wit. *Club Paradise* benefits from an excellent (but underused) huge cast, conservative direction, and writing that, while in no danger of pulling a Pulitzer, hits an adequately amusing middle-brow niche. Williams does a remarkably restrained—sedated, even—turn as Jack Moniker, a Chicago firefighter in search of a quieter way of life who instead winds up embroiled in Saint Nicholas' own sort of pandemonium.

Joining him on this sunny romp are such diverse thespians as Peter O'Toole, reggae singer Jimmy Cliff, Twiggy, Adolph Caesar, Brian Doyle-Murray, and Joanna Cassidy, plus a gaggle of SCTV veterans—Rick Moranis, Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin, Robin Duke, and Joe Flaherty. All of these fine people perform competently, but O'Toole is exceptional as Sir Anthony, a droll, world-weary British governor general. Twiggy is

comfortably delightful; Moranis and Levy do predictable schtick as geeks ineptly trying to score pot and women.

Like many vacations, what happens happens, and the film skips lightly through its simple story of perfidious politicians and conniving capitalists. The general lack of racism, nudity, vulgarity, and bloodshed makes this one of the mildest PG-13s in a long while. There are no big laughs (the best bit is Jack's encouragement to the two would-be lotharios: "They said that you weren't fit to sleep with pigs, but I stood up for you—I said you were"), but the dialogue moves along briskly enough to seem funnier than it actually is.

During *Club Paradise's* short theatrical life, critics marveled at the number of top-notch funny people needed (?) to concoct this mild entertainment. And there is something odd about toney folks like O'Toole and Caesar doing what is little more than movie-of-the-week froth. But if that's what it takes nowadays for Hollywood to whip up pleasant family fare, so be it. —Ira Robbins

BACK TO SCHOOL

1986. Rodney Dangerfield, Keith Gordon, Sally Kellerman; dir. Alan Metter. 97m. (PG-13) \$79.95. HBO/Cannon. Image: excel.

So kiddo, you want to learn how to make a major studio comedy summer blockbuster? Leave it to Professor Orion. Here's the assignment: we got Rodney Dangerfield and we need to create (this is a creative business, you know) what we call a "vehicle" for him. He'll do his schtick if we do ours, which is to find a story line he can do it in. So we need a situation. Kids...kids...it's summer remember, kids are your ticket buyers, what can kids relate to? Other than the Rodney schtick, I mean. School! That's it! Rodney goes back to school! There's our title, *Back to School*. High school? No, that's too unbelievable. College! There we go. Rodney is a rich guy, like in *Caddyshack*, but uneducated—that's plausible, right?—and he goes back to college to help his son along. Great!

He's got to go to class, so we can have weird teachers, one a dishy blonde Rod can fall for, and another who can't stand him, for tension. Rod's a rich businessman, so let the bad guy be the business professor. Love interest, villain, schtick, what're we missing here? Something...something...sports! A sport Rod and his son can both do! What *can* Rod do? (Believably, that is.) Diving! They're both divers but the son has trouble making the team because he lacks confidence. This'll be good for ending the picture. It's upbeat and we'll have a *Chariots*

of Fire/Olympics thing going. And the diving angle can ante up a love interest and a villain for the son to *Rambo* on! Too much! I told you this would be a snap!

So here's our picture: Rodney goes to school to visit his son, who isn't doing so hot, and gives the dean—we'll call him Dean Martin, ha ha—a big donation to let him study with his son. The son falls for the girlfriend of his rival on the diving team, and Rod falls for the bombshell English professor who, natch, goes out with the business professor. Then Rod and his kid make the diving jock and the business prof look like idiots and they both get the girl and make great dives in the finale. Everybody cheers! It's brilliant! It's great! It's so high concept the title says it all: Rodney Dangerfield in *Back to School*. What a sales angle!

What? You're worried about the script, the jokes, the rest of the movie? Baby, kiddo, sweetie! Don't give it another thought! We can hire people for that. Those suckers in the theater will eat up whatever we dish out. We're creative, dollface, we got something better than a movie—we got a package!

—M. George Stevenson

HOWARD THE DUCK

1986. Lea Thompson, Jeffrey Jones, Tim Robbins; dir/co-wr. Willard Huyck. 111m. (PG) Hi St ss \$79.95. MCA. Image: good.

"I'm obviously in some terrible nightmare," says Lea Thompson early on in *Howard the Duck*, and, boy, has she hit the nail on the head. *Howard* is one of those movies that cried out for someone—anyone—in the creative loop to note that it *just isn't working*. Producer George Lucas should have realized that the fowl product was less duck than turkey.

A box office failure will often find its second wind on video—especially one that took such a precipitous risk as starring three-foot high, cigar smoking duck, known and loved to a cult of comic book fans, but obscure to the rest of us. However, those who make the mistake of bringing *Howard* home will discover that it wasn't the risk that brought the project to ruin, but befuddled execution. After deciding to portray Howard with a group of kid actors stuffed into a state-of-the-art Halloween costume, not much imaginative power was left for such items as plot, character development, and the all-important directorial tone that could support such an odd protagonist. Despite the irreverent concept, awesome expense, moviemaking's best resources, and a Thomas Dolby score, Huyck was unable to contrive the slick hipness that one expects from a Lucas epic.

Poor Thompson is left with shards of a role as Beverly, the Cleveland punk singer who dresses like an outcast from Prince's band. Her music isn't the only place where she hits the wrong notes: her affection for the extraterrestrial duck (oh yes, at heart this is one more tired old space opera) not only accelerates too quickly, but at one point meanly teases with a come-on to a sexual climax that might offend John Waters. The other actors tough it out in generally thankless roles, with only Robbins impressive as a goofy lab assistant.

As the film continues, the characters increasingly yield center stage to the special-effects technicians, but in smaller, unforgiving video, their magic looks hollow, even desperate in its attempt to regain what interest might be left. It's funny—in the old days, when adapting high-tone novels to film, one heard about film being a "lower art form" than books.



'Howard the Duck' flies off into the turkey archives.

More recently, film has achieved "equal but different" status as an art form. *Howard the Duck* establishes once and for all that film is a lower art form than comic books.

—Steven Levy

RUNNING SCARED

1986. Billy Crystal, Gregory Hines; dir. Peter Hyams. 107m. (R) Hi St cc \$79.95. MGM/UA. Image: good.

It was probably inevitable after the success of *Beverly Hills Cop* that studio execs would scramble to find ways to plug other ex-*Saturday Night Live* stars into creaky action adventures. This particular vehicle is structured around Billy Crystal, an inspired stand-up comedian and gifted mimic, and Gregory Hines, best known as Baryshnikov's dancin' pal in *White Nights*. They are both appealing comic actors and do a good best-buddy act, but their talent is forced to serve a thoroughly pointless shoot-em-up, directed functorily by Peter Hyams (2010).

Crystal and Hines portray two Chicago vice cops out to nail a hood with ambitions of being the town's "first Spanish godfather." After they get into a couple of shootouts and mess up a stake-out, their lieutenant sends them on vacation to Key West, where they decide to retire from the force and open a bar. But first it's back to Chicago to finish off the drug dealer.

Running Scared's title suggests an interesting angle that seems to have been excised from the final product. These daredevils police the Second City by taking stupid risks and generally violating people's constitutional rights. (If the idea of Crystal doing Bronson seems weird, well, that's part of the problem.) When they quit the department, you'd think they'd slack off for a month until they can go to Florida; instead, they remain just as foolhardy. The trip, rather than being the plot's turning point, is merely an excuse to show women in bikinis.

Without any character development, there isn't much for Crystal and Hines to do except wisecrack, mug, and fondle their weapons. As a comedy, *Running Scared* isn't very funny; as an action-adventure, it's uninvolved and quite predictable. The most encouraging thing is that Crystal never once says, "You look mahvelous."

—Louis Kesten

OUT OF BOUNDS

1986. Anthony Michael Hall, Jenny Wright; dir. Richard Tuggle. 92m. (R) St Hi ss \$79.95. RCA/Columbia. Image: good.

Up to now, Anthony Michael Hall has played sensitive, funny, obnoxious geeks. In *Out of Bounds* he's just a



'Absolute Beginners': vague, hyperactive, abundantly stylish.

geek, Iowa farmboy Daryl Cage, who takes a summer vacation to Los Angeles to see his big brother Tommy, a football player. On the plane he encounters Dizz (Wright, who deserves the 1986 Annie Potts act-alike award), an L.A. flirt who makes four or five passes at Daryl while he gawks and stammers like a drugged Gary Cooper. In the airport, Daryl picks up the wrong luggage, thus acquiring a gym bag full of heroin. The bad guys murder Tommy and his wife, leading the police to conclude that Daryl is the killer. He finds Dizz, and the two of them spend the rest of the movie running around like maniacs. The police make it impossible for Daryl to surrender by shooting at him the bad guys also want to kill him. There are lots of chase sequences, lots of rock songs, and lots of shootouts, complete with exploding cars and airplanes. At the end, Daryl and Dizz walk off arm in arm.

Sound familiar? Quite a few recent films and a whole bunch of *Miami Vice* episodes have used a similar plot. There's no emotional depth—when the credits roll, Daryl is still a mystery because he hasn't shown any personality. This may actually be intentional: the hero doesn't reveal much so he can maintain cool. When Dizz complains Daryl is a hick, he catches up on all the nuances of acting tough and looking sleazy in an afternoon. Dizz reveals more of herself by being truthful and admitting that her name isn't really Dizz.

Anthony Michael Hall may yet have a future as a dramatic actor. Unfortunately, *Out of Bounds* doesn't require him to do any real acting. Given a sensitive, character-oriented story, Hall might prove to be a major talent, but *Out of Bounds* was the wrong path to take.

—Adam Philips

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

1986. Eddie O'Connell, Patsy Kensit, James Fox, David Bowie; dir. Julien Temple. 108m. (PG-13) Hi St \$79.95. HBO/Cannon. Image: good.

Julien Temple is not the first British filmmaker to wax nostalgic about post-war England. From *Plenty* to *Quadrophenia* to *Dance with a Stranger*, movies have worked to recapture and comment on social or political developments with realistic period detail. But none to date have approached the ambitious sociological scope of this mad muddle, a surrealistic singing'n'dancing extravaganza that attempts to sew together such diverse issues as the emergence of teenagers as an economic and cultural force, the increasingly violent escalation of British racism, callous urban redevelopment, youth culture's commercial co-optation, the polarization of teen styles, and exploited pubescent pop icons.

Set in 1958 London, *Absolute Beginners* focuses on teenaged photographer Colin (O'Connell) and Suzette (Kensit), the adorable fashion designer he fancies. The movie sets off in a hundred directions, leaving them all in mid-thought as it careens around, stopping now and then for garish production numbers and bravura cameos by assorted musicians. The callow and confused protagonist offers odd bits of silly cafe philosophy as he decides to sell out—up to a point.

Largely nonsensical and as logical as an acid trip, the film reflects both Temple's rock video background and the milieu in which (and for which) it was created. Reflecting what British teens are currently consuming in music and television, it's vague, hyperactive, and abundantly colorful and stylish. The quasi-jazz tunes that fill the soundtrack were very trendy

last year, and the clothes (a mix of '50s and '70s) match recent fashion fads. The cinematic posing and preening throughout the film targets today's self-conscious kids, searching the past for a culture to call their own.

The rough mix of *West Side Story* with *Fame* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* is, to say the least, disconcerting; other extraneous and contradictory ingredients only aggravate the inconsistent tone. There's no story worth following, and the characters are drawn too roughly to be involving. (The increasingly chaotic finish has a drive and excitement otherwise missing, but seems almost like a different film.) What you get are a few notable onscreen musical pieces, some striking images and performances (especially Bruce Payne as a fascist thug), and a general sense of 108 minutes spent painlessly (if breathlessly) to no particular end. *Absolute Beginners* wants to reinvent movie musicals and teen-rock cinema, but instead wallows in stylish conceit without adding anything of substance.

—Ira Robbins

PSYCHO III

1986. Anthony Perkins, Diana Scarwid, Jeff Fahey; dir. Perkins. 93m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.95. MCA. Image: good.

The watermark test of an adequate horror film is whether or not it frightens you. Extraordinary scare flicks go beyond the call of duty, treating audiences to original ideas in direction, effects, and theme. *Frankenstein* did this. So did *House of Wax* and *The Exorcist*. Undeniably, the Horror Film Hall of Fame would be incomplete without *Psycho*.

Horror film sequels have an additional

set of responsibilities. Not only must they carry the mandatory fear elements, they should also pay fair tribute to their predecessors. One would think that Anthony Perkins has too much going for him to sacrifice his integrity for a sequel unworthy of his original performance, especially when that sequel is his first shot at directing. *Psycho III* has none of the impact of the original Hitchcock classic. Neither does it carry the intrigue and charm of *Psycho II*, the "original" sequel made in 1982. What it does have is lots of schmaltz.

Norman is still running the Bates Motel, although business is terrible. It's been 22 years since he was found guilty of hacking up Marion Crane and the others. He's done his time in a psychiatric hospital, and townsfolk reckon he's cured. They also say his mother is long dead, although some claim to have heard him talking to her in the old mansion at night. Now, a local waitress has disappeared without a trace. Something, we know, is rotten at the Bates place.

There are plenty of allusions to the first two films—both verbal and visual. Perkins often seems to be winking at the camera for the benefit of aficionados, and references in the screenplay abound. The young woman (played by Scarwid) who stays at the motel this time has, as Norman duly notes, the same initials as a former occupant. Perkins' dry humor is quite funny in spots, and he obviously had fun filming many of the scenes, some of which are hysterical.

Psycho III's problem is its ambivalence—whether to camp it up or be a serious horror film; to parody *Psycho* or stand on its own. The mentality is strictly

splatter film, abandoning the brilliant suspense that Hitchcock created. Fortunately, with the resolution of the Norman/mother mystery, there seems to be no opening for a fourth chapter. Good-bye, Norman.

—Clifford Meth

FREAKS

1932. B&W. Harry Earles, Wallace Ford, Leila Hyams, Olga Baclanova; pr./dir. Tod Browning. 66m. Hi St \$59.95. MGM/UA. Image: good.

One of the most unusual and touchingly humanist films of all time, *Freaks* bears repeated viewings, if only to assure the disbelieving spectator that its assortment of onscreen specimens is indeed real. The film focuses on a circus, depicting the consequences of messing with "the code of the freaks." The messer is a conniving blonde "big person," Cleopatra (Baclanova), who attempts to separate "small person" Hans (Earles) from his fortune by first marrying, then poisoning him. But a freak and his money are not easily parted, particularly with a weapon-toting posse of such memorable characters as Prince Randian ("The Living Torso"), Johnny Eck ("The Half-Boy"), and the pinheads Zip and Pip.

The code—all for one, one for all—is spelled out in a prologue designed to buffer the film's subject matter. Even this barely prevented the film's decline into obscurity. It played here under such catchy titles as *Nature's Mistakes* and *Forbidden Love*, but was banned in England for 30 years. Though Browning got the go-ahead due to the success of his *Dracula*, the former circus clown was obviously ahead of his time.

The film's highlights include an unforgettable dinner during which Hans' brethren attempt to integrate Cleopatra into the fold by chanting "Gobble gobble, we accept you, one of us." Earlier, Browning depicts a pastoral pinhead picnic that's almost disrupted by a horrified watchman. And how do the Siamese twins Violet and Daisy arrange their marital responsibilities? Browning plays his humanist hand both ways, first by shocking his audience, then by playing on its liberal guilt. He'd used this tactic before: in 1927's *The Unknown*, Lon Chaney played a circus knife thrower who has his arms amputated to win the girl he loves (Joan Crawford).

Though the acting is amateurish and Browning's direction nothing to write home about, *Freaks* is a bona fide cult classic. Containing unadulterated compassion amid uncompromising weirdness, the film's message is summed up by Hans, who complains that big people "don't realize I'm a man—with the same feelings they have." —Richard Gehr



Anthony Perkins gives Norman another try in 'Psycho III.'

QUICK TAKES ON FILMS

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

1986. John Lithgow, Christopher Collet, Jill Eikenberry; dir. Marshall Brickman. 117m. (PG) \$79.95. HBO/Cannon. Image: excel.

Irked by his mom's affair with a good-natured weapons scientist, teen whiz Paul Stevens (Collet) swipes a jug of super plutonium and builds an atomic bomb so he can win a science fair and embarrass Mathewson (Lithgow). Events, of course, escalate dangerously. Comedian Marshall Brickman tries hard to ignite this fissionable premise into another *War Games*, but he's lacking megatonnage. Bursts of bright dialogue and an ingenious demonstration of how to build a nuclear device using everyday household objects aren't enough to fully overcome the film's pokey pacing and leaden message. *The Manhattan Project* is entertaining but not compelling.

—Stan Pinkwas

REFORM SCHOOL GIRLS

1986. Wendy O. Williams, Pat Ast, Linda Carol, Sybil Danning; wr./dir. Tom DeSimone. 94m. (R) Hi \$79.95. New World. Image: good.

What makes genre/exploitation pictures so likable is the lack of any significant difference between garbage and greatness. This lurid bimbos-behind-bars stinker has a slightly parodic edge and rabid acting by destructo rock singer Williams (who looks—and is—twice the age of her character), but otherwise shrugs itself into the predictable sociopathy of attractive women getting naked and beating each others' brains out. As sadistic matron Edna, Ast mugs like a violently kvetchy Divine, but serves only to incite riots among the lingerie-clad inmates. (Danning fans should note that your voluptuous icon contributes nothing whatsoever to the film's "R" rating.)

—Ira Robbins

MY AMERICAN COUSIN

1986. Margaret Langrick, John Wildman, Richard Donat; wr./dir. Sandy Wilson. 94m (PG) \$79.95. Media. Image: good.

Uh oh, it's *Canadian Graffiti*! Remember Paul LeMat and Mackenzie Phillips as the greaser and whiney ugly duck-



Christopher Collet (left) in 'The Manhattan Project.'

ling who cruised around for an evening in *American Graffiti*? Well, if you can tolerate a summer's worth of an almost identical combination of antagonists—minus the humor and to the incessant strains of "Theme from a Summer Place"—you may be the audience *My American Cousin* is seeking. Adolescence in the late '50s was tough, but this film makes it out to be a horrific bore as well. Canadians voted *My American Cousin* the Best Picture of the Year, but I'll bet they thought Percy Faith was the king of rock'n'roll, too.

—John Walker

VAMP

1986. Chris Makepeace, Grace Jones, Sandy Baron; wr./dir. Richard Wenk. 93m. (R) Hi St \$79.95. New World. Image: excel.

First, try and accept the premise that all women are airheads, whores, or predators out to drain the blood from any unsuspecting male they can wrap their thighs around. That's essential if you're going to enjoy *Vamp*, a horror yarn with nary a single sympathetic female character (but dozens of offensive ones). This adolescent nightmare instead asks us to identify with two boorish freshmen, in search of strippers for a frat party, who land in a go-go bar which is a haven for hardbodied vampires. Grace Jones, in the role she was born to play—an insatiable but frightening sex object who, thankfully, doesn't have too much dia-

logue—seems to be the main *raison d'être* for this hamhanded attempt to mix rock video, soft-core porn, and lightweight splatter effects.

—Louis Kesten

ZULU DAWN

1979. Peter O'Toole, Burt Lancaster, John Mills; dir. Douglas Hickox. 117m. (PG) \$79.95. T.W.E. Image: excel.

Zulu Dawn, a prequel to 1964's superior *Zulu*, chronicles Britain's 1879 invasion of what is now South Africa. The climactic onslaught, in which the Zulus overrun half the British force, is a rip-snorting, cast-of-thousands spectacle any action fan should enjoy. The rest, less happily, is plodding and contradictory: although the screenplay portrays the British as arrogant bounders who get what they deserve, the impact is thoroughly undone by a heroic visual style that turns the invaders into valorous martyrs and the Zulus into a faceless, spear-chucking horde. Give us a break! Two other points worth nothing about the video version: the small screen chops off most of the subtitled Zulu dialogue but restores 19 minutes of footage cut from the theatrical version.

—Stan Pinkwas

MR. LOVE

1985. Barry Jackson, Maurice Denham, Margaret Tyzack; dir. Roy Battersby. 92m. (PG-13) Hi cc \$69.95. Warner. Image: good.

Mr. Love exemplifies that current cinema hybrid, the down-and-offbeat film. If you can imagine *The Man Who Loved Women* left out to wrinkle in the English fog, you may have a glimmer as to what *Mr. Love* is about. Jackson is almost excessively low-key as Donald Lovelace, a spacey late-blooming lothario who quietly nurtures a variety of lonely females. What keeps *Mr. Love* from being an actually enjoyable experience is the gratuitously depressing lives his mistresses lead. That *Mr. Love* (lace) has touched them all with his belabored stoicism seems to beg credit for quantity rather than quality. By the time they've finished interring the title character, *Mr. Love* leaves less an aftertaste of black comedy than of white tragedy. Which makes the overall effect simply grey.

—John Walker

VIDEOS

MADE FOR HOME VIEWING

FAWLTY TOWERS

1975, 1979. John Cleese, Prunella Scales, Connie Booth, Andrew Sachs; dir. John Howard Davies, Douglas Argent, Bob Spiers. 4 cas. 90m. ea. \$29.98 ea. CBS/Fox. Image: good.

Everyone has stayed in a bad hotel at one point or another, but it's unlikely anyone has ever had the ill luck to check into a seaside resort hotel as horribly run as Fawlty Towers. The Spanish waiter speaks no English; guests die; and there is sugar in the salt shaker. And if you try to complain you could get involved in an exchange like this:

Guest: "These prawns are off."

Hotel Manager: "But you've eaten half of them."

"Well, I didn't notice at the start."

"You didn't notice at the start?"

"Well, it was the sauce. I wasn't sure."

"So you ate half to make sure. Do you want another first course?"

"Well, cancel it."

"Cancel it! Deduct it from the bill is what you mean."

"As it's inedible."

"Only half of it's inedible, apparently."

"Well, deduct half now and if my wife brings up the other half during the night we'll claim the balance in the morning."

That's the kind of place Fawlty Towers is, primarily because that's the kind of man hotel manager Basil Fawlty (Cleese) is—a toadying, bullying, hilarious hotelier who can turn a fire drill into an exercise in insanity and can never, ever get anything right. To Basil, hotel guests are an encumbrance, people who "expect to be waited on hand and foot while I'm trying to run a hotel...poking around for things to complain about." Basil is hindered and helped by Manuel the nitwit waiter (Sachs), whose broken English is only matched by his broken intelligence, waitress/maid/aspiring artist Polly (Booth), and his wife, Sybil (Scales), a sharp-tongued engine of efficiency.

The 12-episode BBC series is pure genius, a show that alternates between side-splitting farce (Basil and Manuel trying to find a runaway rat while a hotel inspector prowls about) and cutting dialogue. To call *Fawlty Towers* the funniest series ever made may be an overstatement, but not much of one. It is certainly the funniest show ever made about a hotel—a wild, terrific comedy feast that

is nearly flawless.

CBS/Fox has released the entire series on four cassettes of three episodes each. Check in! —Tom Soter

BEAT THE SAT: VERBAL, MATH

1986. Suzee Vlk; pr. Academic and Career Enhancement. 40m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Spinnaker. (Also available for \$39.95 as "Ace the SAT," one 80m. tape from Intermedia, 1600 Dexter N., Seattle, Wash. 98109.) Image: good.

According to Educational Testing Services, the company that administers most standardized academic exams in America, success on the SAT is the "product of two things: the student's native ability and the opportunities for mental exercise that he finds in his school, his home, and his community. Thus the only 'preparation' for the SAT that might have an effect on the score is, in a sense, a lifetime of intellectual challenge."

ETS wants you to believe you can't be coached for the SAT, but studies have proven that a few weeks of practice and cramming can raise one's score far more than "a lifetime of intellectual challenge" can. That means the SAT isn't as egalitarian as ETS says; those who can afford prep courses have a huge advantage.

Although cheaper than a course, *Beat the SAT* is far more expensive than buying a book, which you'll need anyway,

since the cassettes don't include sample tests. Each tape is basically a lecture, with samples and tips on how to deal with each type of question. For example, in the Antonyms section, coach Vlk suggests students eliminate answers that mean the same thing, thus reducing the number of possible solutions from five to three—and making guessing a better gamble. In the math section she advises estimating answers if you're short on time, and encourages skipping over questions in both parts if the next one looks easier. Sage advice: hard questions don't score any more points than easy ones.

I do have a few arguments with *Beat the SAT*. The booklet that comes with the *Math* tape advises memorizing measurement conversion tables, which are not tested. Vlk also advises against guessing on certain sections of the test, although it is *always* statistically advantageous to guess.

Vlk doesn't cover all the bases. But is the information given here worth the bucks? The video presentation doesn't enhance this material much; it would have been just as useful in a 10-or-20-page pamphlet. (Books with more comprehensive advice do exist, the current critical favorite being the Princeton Review's *Cracking the SAT*, whose cynical attitude is refreshing.)

—Louis Kesten



John Cleese (right) and Andrew Sachs brew up vacation nightmares in 'Fawlty Towers.'

DR. DUCK'S SUPER SECRET ALL-PURPOSE SAUCE

1986. Michael Nesmith, Whoopi Goldberg, Martin Mull, Jay Leno. 82m. Hi St \$39.95. Pacific Arts. Image: good.

PARAMOUNT COMEDY THEATER: WELL DEVELOPED

1986. Howie Mandel, Judy Carter, Bruce Mahler; dir. Joe Hostettler. 71m. Hi St \$29.95. LV St \$29.95. Paramount. Image: good.

Michael Nesmith's *Dr. Duck* is like an American Monty Python effort: mini-movies stuck together, some veering hither and yon between hilarity and yawns. Several comics guest star, using video visuals to liven up their acts. Whoopi Goldberg doesn't do her ditsy surfer chick schtick onstage—she's on the beach surrounded by real surfer chicks. Garry Shandling doesn't just talk about a bad date—he brings viewers along to relive the scene. Quickies and music videos further vary the action. But, if the Pythons can do tedious non-interviews, so can Mike Nesmith, here playing a boring film director chatting with Dick Cavett.

Paramount's *Comedy Theater* has less creativity and maybe one-tenth the laughs as four desperate comics yock it up live onstage. Edit together any quartet of first-time "funnymen" from *The Tonight Show* and you get the idea. Howie Mandel's a cliché of the anything-for-a-laugh emcee/host. To a ringsider: "What's your name? Les?" To the ringsider's companion: "Then you must be More!"

Mandel introduces the comics, each one worse than the next. Bob Saget, an L.A. Lite Yuppie, "geeked out" at the world, gripes about how bad Sylvester Stallone's acting is. Philip Wellford hands out toilet paper "to give you some idea of the crap I'm gonna do tonight." Then he demonstrates funny ways of juggling. Bruce Mahler fills his mouth with water and squirts a stream through his teeth. Then he puts fingers into his eyes and mouth and makes faces. Later he waves a raw chicken.

Judy Carter is irritating in almost every way a comedienne can be. She makes femme cracks ("Gimme a break, do you know how hard this is to do when you're retaining water?"). She enjoys leery hijinks. Sprinkling water on her blouse she says she's "Jacqueline Bisset in *The Deep*." Finally, it's failed Joan Rivers lines: "Oh, I'm such a slut! I have to wear control top pantyhose all the time!" Then she shouts a straight line: "People are gonna pay for this tape?"

—Ron Smith



'Boris Godunov': opera at its grandest. Yevgeni Nesterenko in the title role.

BORIS GODUNOV

1978. Yevgeni Nesterenko, Vladislav Piavko. 181m. St Hi \$69.95. Kultur. Image: excel.

For lovers of the Italian blood-and-pas-sion school of opera, there is no substitute for the real thing, yet I challenge the most ardent *Toscaphile* or *Verdimane* not to find a great deal to recommend in *Boris Godunov*. The masterwork of Russian composer Moussorgsky, *Boris* is opera at its grandest: sweeping spectacle, intensely emotional action, and, in the role of Boris, vocal nuance and stamina.

This is the story of a rather tangled period in 16th century Russian history: one Czar has died, his only heir, Dmitri, was murdered some time before at the secret instigation of Boris. The leaderless populace (also secretly instigated by Boris) call for the election of Godunov as Czar. Like Julius Caesar, Boris refuses the crown. At first. By the end of Act I, however, he accepts it, sadly, and his troubles begin. A young monk, Gregory, suspects Boris. Lusting for revenge, Gregory sets himself up as the miraculous revivification of the murdered Dmitri and launches a rebellion from Poland. Big bummer for Boris, da?

Performed in the most common version of the score by the Bolshoi Opera in Moscow, this lavishly-costumed, intelligently-directed production plays to all the opera's strengths. As Boris, Nesterenko commands the gamut of tortured emotions without ever becoming grotesque—no mean feat. No meaner is the

fact that at three hours the opera is continually involving musically and dramatically: this is an ideal realization of its intentions. Kudos to the anonymous Soviet television director—let's import him or her to give lessons to PBS. About the only thing I could ask is that someone tell the producers that no one wants to see applause and intermission mingling. In some things, even the USSR hasn't eliminated *quite* enough of the evils of capitalism. —M. George Stevenson

RIPPING YARNS

1977, 1979. Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Ian Ogilvy; dir. Terry Hughes, Jim Franklin, Alan Bell. 90 min. \$29.98. CBS/Fox. Image: good.

Ripping Yarns is the sort of comedy where prep school students are nailed to walls, tied in sacks, and forced to participate in 24-mile, one-legged hops; where a prisoner-of-war hopes to escape by building an airplane out of 1400 toilet paper rolls; and where a failing soccer team is sold for scrap to a metal dealer. It's the type of show where an Orson Welles-like host can't remember his lines and a Professional School Bully "is allowed certain privileges, such as having unmarried Filipino women in his room, smoking opium, and having a sauna instead of morning prayer."

Ripping Yarns, a program that only Britons could make but which everyone can enjoy, was written by two men attuned to the absurd in both life and literature: Michael Palin and Terry Jones, late of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The nine-episode BBC series was created in 1977 as an affectionate parody of the adventure stories the pair grew up with—tales of sports heroes, British spies, and Indian princes. The result is weird and wacky comedy, with Palin excellent in three very different roles: inept schoolboy Tomkinson, crafty P.O.W. Phipps, and fanatical soccer enthusiast Gordon. Tomkinson is the best part, mostly because of the inventive script, a tale of supreme ineptitude loaded with wonderful jokes. (In shop class, the boy builds a 1500-ton model of a ship and is reprimanded because "it's not a model if it's full-scale; take it down at once!") As Phipps, he is stymied by his fellow prisoners, who tell him "there is a proper way of doing things" and that he must present his escape plans to six different escape committees for approval. Very British. Very amusing.

There are a pair of additional volumes—*More Ripping Yarns* and *Even More Ripping Yarns*—that contain the other six episodes, including "Across the Andes by Frog," which is quite a trip.

—Tom Soter

Directory

NEW RELEASES ON TAPE AND DISC



Belizaire the Cajun. 1985. Armand Assante, Robert Duvall. Land feud in Louisiana Bayou, ca. 1850. 101m. Hi St cc \$79.98. Key.

Big Trouble in Little China. 1986. Kurt Russell, James Hong, Suzee Pai; dir. John Carpenter. Search for woman leads trucker to spirit realm below San Francisco's Chinatown. 99m. (PG-13) Hi ss cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox.

Caravan to Vacarres. 1974. David Birney, Charlotte Rampling. American hired to escort Hungarian scientist back to U.S. 98m. (PG) \$69.95. Media.

Cocaine Wars. 1986. John Schneider, Kathryn Witt. U.S. agent infiltrates stronghold of South American drug baron. 82m. (R) \$79.95. Media.

Jubal. 1956. Glenn Ford, Ernest Borgnine, Rod Steiger, Valerie French, Charles Bronson. Cowhand spurns boss' wife who won't take no for an answer. 101m. \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

KGB: The Secret War. 1986. Michael Billington, Sally Kellerman. Russians out to eliminate defector. 90m. (R) \$79.95. Continental.

Melody in Love. 1978. Melody O'Bryan. Young woman enters romantic triangle with beautiful cousin. 94m. Hi cc \$59.98. Key.

Mighty Joe Young. 1949. B&W. Terry Moore, Ben Johnson, Robert Armstrong. Tamed ape escapes degrading nightclub act. Effects by Ray Harryhausen. 94m. \$19.95. VidAmerica.

Out of Bounds. 1986. Anthony Michael Hall, Jenny Wright. Baggage mixup leaves youth holding \$1 million worth of heroin. 93m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Patriot. 1986. Jeff Conaway, Michael J. Pollard. Agent prevents terrorist group from diverting nuclear warheads en route to government base. 88m. (R) \$79.95. Vestron.

Reform School Girls. 1986. Sybil Danning, Wendy O. Williams. Inmate at girls' juvenile facility finds abuse rampant. 94m. (R) B Hi V \$79.95. New World.

Riding with Death. 1976. Ben Murphy, Katherine Crawford. Invisible federal agent guards secret fuel. 97m. Hi \$39.95. MCA.

The Scalawag Bunch: The Classic Tale of Robin Hood. 1976. Mark Damon. Swashbuckler about English outlaw. 103m. (G) \$39.95. Monterey.

The Sea Gypsies. 1978. Robert Logan, Mikki Jamison-Olsen. World cruise halted by shipwreck. 102m. (G) Hi \$59.95. Warner.

Terrorist. 1985. Vera Johns, Allan Granville. Mother rescues son from terrorists at ranch. 81m. \$29.95. Monterey.

What Comes Around. 1986. Jerry Reed, Bo Hopkins, Barry Corbin. Debilitated country-western singer gets help from estranged brother. 92m. Hi cc \$79.95. Charter.

Zulu Dawn. 1979. Burt Lancaster, Peter O'Toole. Prequel to *Zulu*: British colonials in Africa plan to lead England into offensive against natives. 98m. Hi ss \$79.95. TWE.



The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin. 1986. anim. 3 cas.: *Treasure of Grundo* (You've Got to Take Good Care of You), *Guest of the Grunges* (Do You Remember the Day You Met Your Best Friend?), *Escape from the Treacherous Mountains* (Families Are Something Special).

75m., 35m., 35m., \$24.95, \$12.95, \$12.95. Hi-Tops.

The Adventures of the American Rabbit. 1986. anim. Feature film; origin of super-hero hare. 81m. (G) Hi \$59.95. Paramount.

Beany & Cecil Vol. 12. 1986 comp. anim. Dir. Bob Clampett. Six cartoons from the TV series. 40m. Hi \$24.95. Magic.

Big Foot and the Muscle Machines. 1986. anim. Toy tie-in: mammoth trucks. 53m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

Classic Tales Retold. 1977. anim. Includes *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Aladdin and His Lamp*, more. 90m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

The Edison Twins: The Secret of Windigo Lake. 1986. anim. Sibling sleuths explore werewolf attacks. 75m. Hi \$29.95. Magic.

Flight of the Navigator. 1986. Joey Cramer; dir. Randal Kleiser. Boy pilots alien craft. 89m. (PG) Hi ss \$79.95. Disney.

PROGRAMMING LEGEND

DATE

Varies according to type of program. **Films:** original theatrical release. **Made-for-broadcast:** first telecast. **Made-for-video:** first release in any format. **Compilations:** production of collected work.

FORMAT

All programs are available in Beta and VHS unless noted. All programs on disc are also available on tape unless noted. The following abbreviations apply:

B: Beta videocassette
V: VHS videocassette
8: 8mm videocassette
LV: LaserVision videodisc, in either in CLV or CAV playing format.

CED: CED videodisc

AUDIO FEATURES

All available audio information is provided. Dolby noise reduction, which is used on virtually all VHS tapes, is not noted. The following abbreviations apply:

St: stereo
Hi: Hi-Fi
ss: Dolby surround stereo
cc: closed-captioned
CX: CX encoded

IMAGE QUALITY

For theatrical releases, this rating refers to the transfer quality and overall visual appearance. For non-theatrical programs, it refers to overall visual quality.

excel.: exceptionally attractive and/or faithful to the original
good: adequate but unremarkable
fair: passable, but below average
poor: seriously flawed

ETCETERA

Official MPAA ratings (G, PG, PG-13, R, X) are provided when available. All programs are in color unless noted. List prices are not given for CED discs.

anim.: animated
B&W: black & white
cas.: videocassette
comp.: compilation
czd.: colorized
dir.: directed by
m.: minutes
n.a.: not available
nar.: narrated by
pr.: produced by
RE: reissue
sub.: subtitled
wr.: written by

Editors' choices in the Directory are highlighted with red titles.

Gobots: Battle of the Rock Lords. 1986. anim. Voices of Margot Kidder, Roddy McDowell, Telly Savalas. Feature film about popular robot toys. 74m. Hi \$59.95. Paramount.

Heathcliff and the Catillac Cats: Family Tree and Other Tails. 1986. anim. Six stories. 65m. \$29.95. Magic.

He-Man and the Masters of the Universe: Skeletor's Revenge. 1986. anim. Villain plans to wipe He-Man out for good. 65m. \$29.95. Magic.

Homer Price Stories. 1986 comp. Adaptations of two chapters from Robert McCloskey's *Homer Price: The Doughnuts, The Case of the Cosmic Comic*. Approx. 35m. \$29.95. CC.

Inspector Gadget, the Daffy Detective. 1986. anim. Feature-length outing pits inventor/sleuth against Dr. Claw. 110m. \$69.95. Karl.

Jayce and the Wheeled Warriors: The Liberty Stone. 1986. anim. Interstellar search for Jayce's father. 110m. \$29.95. Magic.

MASK, the Power of Heroes. 1986. anim. Super-hero team rescues leader of peace alliance. 110m. cc \$69.95. Karl.

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel and Other Stories. 1986 comp. anim. Adaptations of title tale, *Burt Dow: Deep-Water Man, Moon Man*. 30m. \$29.95. CC.

Pole Position: Racing to Adventure. 1986. anim. Enemy agents tamper with defense computers. 110m. \$69.95. Karl.

Pole Position: Road Fever. 1986. anim. The Pole Position team

tracks down would-be art thief. 110m. \$69.95. Karl.

The Popples Vol. 6. 1986. anim. Six stories. 65m. Hi \$29.95. Magic.

Rub-a-Dub-Dub. 1983. anim. Mother Goose narrates stories about Little Bo Peep, Little Boy Blue, other fairy-tale characters. 60m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

Shadow World. 1983. anim. Boy transforms into super-being with telepathic powers. 77m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

Show Off! A Kid's Guide to Being Cool. 1986. Malcolm Jamal Warner, Fred Newman demonstrate tricks, jokes, dance moves, recipe for "slime," more. 60m. \$59.95. Vestron.

Starbirds. 1982. anim. Young starfighter launches robot aircraft against aliens. 75m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

Tomboy and the Champ. 1961. Candy Moore, Ben Johnson. Texas girl raises prize cow. 92m. \$49.95. United.

The Ugly Duckling and Other Classic Fairytales. 1986 comp. anim. Includes title story, *The Stonecutter, The Swineherd*. Approx. 30m. \$29.95. CC.

Voltus 5. 1983. anim. Earth protected from aliens by five children with special powers. 75m. \$29.95. Hi-Tops.

The Wombles: Meet the Wombles. 1986. anim. Family of furry, underground creatures who live beneath England's Wimbledon Common. 60m. \$19.95. Magic.

Show Off! A Kid's Guide to Being Cool



LABELS FOR LESS

Special promotions and other pricing news

• **Playhouse Video** rounds up 17 titles for "The Great Western Collection" at \$19.98 each: *Red River, The Kentuckian, Dodge City, Bandolero, Jesse James* and its sequel, *The Return of Frank James, Big Jake, Rio Conchos, My Darling Clementine, Buffalo Bill and the Indians, Invitation to a Gunfighter, Breakheart Pass, Warlock, The Undeclared, Butch and Sundance: The Early Days, When the Legends Die, and Support Your Local Sheriff*.

• More "Musicals Great Musicals" from **MGM/UA** at \$29.95 apiece: reissues of *The Pirate, On the Town, Kismet*, and *Showboat*, plus new titles *Broadway Melody of 1938* and *Thank Your Lucky Stars* (listed in this month's Directory.)

• **Embassy** has reduced 20 catalogue titles to \$24.95 for its "Survival Kit" promotion. The complete roster: *Farewell My Lovely, Nightkill, Saturday the 14th, The Tamarind Seed, Circle of Iron, Eye for an Eye, Another Country, The Chicken Chronicles, The Highest Honor, Deadly Force, Mussolini and I, Soldier Blue, The Ruling Class, Laura, Trinity Is Still My Name, Marvin & Tige, Breaker Breaker, King of the Mountain, The Hit*, and *The Wild Angels*. Sale ends April 30.

• **Fox Hills Video**, a new subsidiary of **Media Home Entertainment**, now controls **Nostalgia Merchant's** catalogue and is reissuing eight deleted titles at \$19.95 each: *The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer, Swing Time, Bachelor Mother, Annie Oakley, Sylvia Scarlett, The Big Sky, Stranger on the Third Floor*, and *Out of the Past*. Also arriving in stores are four new releases at \$19.95: *Laurel & Hardy Comedy Classics Vol. 9* plus three volumes of *The Abbott and Costello Show*.

• Five new comedy releases from **Paramount**, dubbed the "United States of Hysteria," at \$29.95 apiece: *The Best of Spike Jones Vol. 1, Rich Hall's Vanishing America, Howie Mandel's North American Watusi Tour, Jay Leno: The American Dream*, and *Garry Shandling Alone in Las Vegas*.

• Through April, **HBO/Cannon** is offering a \$5.00 mail-in rebate to purchasers of both *First Blood* and *Rambo: First Blood Part II*.

—Steve Daly



The Abbott and Costello Show Vols. 1-3. Ca. 1950s. B&W. Episodes of TV program, 2 per cas. 50m. ea. \$19.95 ea. Fox.

The Ambushers. 1967. Dean Martin, James Gregory. Spy spoof with Martin as agent Matt Helm. 102m. Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Back to School. 1986. Rodney Dangerfield, Sally Kellerman, Robert Downey Jr., Ned Beatty; dir. Alan Metter. Self-made millionaire enters college to keep son from dropping out. 91m. (PG-13) Hi ss \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Charlie Barnett's Terms of Enrollment. 1986. Comedian Barnett shows you how to succeed in col-

lege without really trying. Guests Richard Belzer, Dr. Joyce Brothers, Cathy Lee Crosby, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Philip Michael Thomas. 46m. Hi St \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

The Check Is in the Mail. 1985. Brian Dennehy, Anne Archer, Dick Shawn. Pharmacist in debt rides his home of all but necessities. 83m. (PG) \$79.95. Media.

Club Paradise. 1986. Robin Williams, Peter O'Toole, Twiggy, Rick Moranis, Eugene Levy; dir. Harold Ramis. Retired fireman, native musician attempt to run Caribbean tourist resort. 96m. (PG-13) Hi ss cc \$79.95. Warner.

Dirty Dishes. 1982. Carol Laure, Pierre Santini; dir. Joyce Bunuel. Housewife yearns for meaningful life. 99m. (R) Hi dubbed or sub. \$29.95. Embassy.

A Fine Mess. 1986. Ted Danson, Richard Mulligan, Stuart Margolin,

Howie Mandel, Paul Sorvino; wr./dir. Blake Edwards. (PG) 100m. ss cc Hi \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

Garry Shandling Alone in Vegas. 1984. Stand-up performance first aired on Showtime. 52m. Hi \$29.95. Paramount.

Ginger and Fred. 1986. Giulietta Masina, Marcello Mastroianni; dir. Federico Fellini. Retired dancing duo reunited for appearance on TV variety show. 128m. Hi sub. \$79.95. MGM/UA.

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Hot Shots. 1986. Made-for-video program featuring comics Dana Carvey, Kevin Nealon, Sinbad, Joe Alasky, J.J. Wall, Charles Fleisher. Taped at L.A.'s Improvisation Club. 55m. \$59.95. Vestron.

Howie Mandel's North American Watusi Tour. 1986. Comic monologue taped in Chicago. 52m. (mature) Hi \$29.95. Paramount.

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In Stitches: Stand Up Comics on the Horizon. 1986. Host Bob Somerby; with Mr. Eddy Strange, Sue Kolinsky, Mike Sullivan-Irwin. 50m. \$29.95. Active.

Jay Leno: The American Dream. 1986. Made-for-cable program. 49m. Hi \$29.95. Paramount.

The Jet Benny Show. 1986. Steve Norman, Devin Dees. Independent feature spoofing *Star Wars* a la *The Jack Benny Show*. 77m. Hi

The Klutz. 1973. Claude Michaud. Nerd ends up on wanted list. 87m. B Hi V \$59.95. New World.

Las Vegas Hillbillies. 1966. Jayne Mansfield, Mamie Van Doren, Richard Kiel, Sonny James. Pair of country singers make it big in Las Vegas. 85m. \$49.95. United.

Laurel & Hardy Comedy Classics Vol. 9. 1986 comp. B&W. Four shorts: *Beau Hunks* ('31), *Chickens Come Home* ('31), *Going Bye Bye* ('34), *Berth Marks* ('29). 108m. \$29.95. Fox.

Likely Stories Vol. 4. 1983. Howard Hesseman, Tony Danza. Spoofs include "documentary" about sleazy movie producer, risqué versions of literary classics. 52m. (mature) \$19.95. U.S.A.

Little Shop of Horrors. 1960, czd. 1986. Jonathan Haze, Jackie Joseph, Dick Miller, Jack Nicholson. Timid keeper murders to feed man-eating plant. 72m. \$69.95 (B&W version also \$69.95). Vestron.

Manny's Orphans. 1978. Jim Baker, Malachy McCourt. Soccer team hopes to bail out broke coach by betting on themselves. 92m. \$69.95. Vestron.

Mon Oncle d'Amerique. 1980. Gerard Depardieu, Nicole Garcia, Roger-Pierre; dir. Alain Resnais. Intersecting lives of three young professionals. 123m. (PG) Hi sub. \$29.95. Embassy.



I Will, I Will for Now

Rich Hall's Vanishing America. 1986. Young comic on cross-country journey. 50m. Hi \$29.95. Paramount.

3 Men and a Cradle. 1985. Roland Giraud, Michel Boujenah, Andre Dussollier. Bachelors care for infant left on their doorstep. 100m. (PG-13) dubbed or sub. \$79.95. Vestron.

Water. 1986. Michael Caine, Valerie Perrine, Brenda Vaccaro, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton. Caribbean oil drillers strike mineral water instead. 89m. (PG-13) Hi ss \$79.95. Paramount.

Wise Guys. 1986. Danny DeVito, Joe Piscopo, Harvey Keitel, Patti LuPone; dir. Brian De Palma. Dimwitted crooks decide to knock off boss. 92m. (R) Hi cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox.

Woman Times Seven. 1967. Shirley Maclaine, Vittorio Gassman, Peter Sellers, Michael Caine, Anita Ekberg, Robert Morley; dir. Vittorio De Sica. Vignettes on male/female relations with Maclaine taking multiple roles. 99m. Hi \$59.95. Embassy.

leased from mental institution. 97m. \$59.95. U.S.A.

Cape Fear. 1961. B&W. Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum, Polly Bergen, Martin Balsam. Ex-con returns to murder smalltown lawyer who sent him to prison. 106m. Hi \$59.95. MCA.

The Cardinal. 1963. Dorothy Gish, Robert Morse, Romy Schneider, John Huston, Burgess Meredith; dir. Otto Preminger. Socially active Irish priest rises to powerful position. 175m. \$59.95. Roach.

Columbo: Prescription Murder. 1967. Peter Falk, Gene Barry, William Windom. Debut of the TV detective: psychiatrist who murdered wife evidently has perfect alibi. 99m. Hi \$39.95. MCA.

D.O.A. 1949, czd. 1986. Edmond O'Brien, Neville Brand, Pamela Britton. Poisoned man tracks down his killer. 83m. \$29.95. Roach.

Dead as a Doorman. 1985. Bradley Whitford, Sharon Schlarth, Bruce Taylor. Building watchman finds he's being watched by gunman. 83m. \$69.95. Vestron.

The Dollmaker. 1984. Jane Fonda, Levon Helm, Geraldine Page. Made-for-TV drama: 1940s Kentucky woman struggles to save family from economic hardships. 140m. Hi cc \$79.98. Playhouse.

Ellis Island. 1984. Greg Martyn, Ann Jillian, Faye Dunaway, Richard Burton, Ben Vereen, Melba Moore. TV mini-series focusing on turn-of-century immigrants. 327m. (2 cas.) \$79.95. U.S.A.

The Empty Canvas. 1964. B&W. Horst Buchholz, Bette Davis, Catherine Spaak. Young artist breaks with possessive mother, has affair with model. 118m. Hi \$59.95. Embassy.

Extremities. 1986. Farrah Fawcett, James Russo, Diana Scarwid. Woman's encounter with brutal rapist. 89m. (R) Hi cc \$79.95. Paramount.

NEW 8mm RELEASES

Arthur. 1981. Dudley Moore, Liza Minnelli. Comedy. 97m. (PG) \$29.95. Warner.

The Great Santini. 1979. Robert Duvall, Blythe Danner. Drama. 116m. (PG) \$29.95. Warner.

Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome. 1985. Mel Gibson, Tina Turner. Action. 107m. (PG-13) ss \$29.95. Warner.

National Lampoon's European Vacation. 1985. Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo. Comedy. 94m. (PG-13) \$29.95. Warner.

The NeverEnding Story. 1984. Noah Hathaway, Barrett Oliver. Children. 94m. (PG) ss \$29.95. Warner.

Pale Rider. 1985. Clint Eastwood, Michael Moriarty, Carrie Snodgrass. Action. 116m. (R) ss \$29.95. Warner.

Police Academy. 1984. Steve Guttenberg, Kim Cattrall. Comedy. 97m. (R) \$29.95. Warner.

Risky Business. 1983. Tom Cruise, Rebecca De Mornay. Comedy. 99m. (R) ss \$29.95. Warner.

Watership Down. 1978. anim. Voices of John Hurt, Ralph Richardson. Drama. 92m. (PG) ss \$29.95. Warner.

Zelig. 1983. B&W. Woody Allen, Mia Farrow. 79m. (PG) \$29.95. Warner.



Absolute Beginners. 1986. David Bowie, Patsy Kensit, Ray Davies, Sade. Teen romance set in '50s London. 107m. (PG-13) Hi ss \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Advise and Consent. 1962. B&W. Henry Fonda, Charles Laughton, Walter Pidgeon, Peter Lawford, Gene Tierney; dir. Otto Preminger. Controversial presidential appointment leads to blackmail and scandal. 139m. \$29.95. Roach.

Bill: On His Own. 1983. Mickey Rooney, Dennis Quaid. Rooney reprises Emmy-winning role as middle-aged retarded man re-

Fires on the Plain. 1959. B&W. Dir. Kon Ichikawa. Grim study of Japanese soldiers in Philippines at close of WWII. 105m. Hi sub. \$29.95. Embassy.

The Goddess. 1958. B&W. Kim Stanley, Patty Duke, Lloyd Bridges; wr. Paddy Chayefsky. Young woman determined to become star. 105m. Hi \$69.95. RCA/Columbia.

Half a Lifetime. 1986. Keith Carradine, Gary Busey, Nick Mancuso. Four poker buddies contemplate unfulfilled aspirations. 58m. Hi \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Half Moon Street. 1986. Sigourney Weaver, Michael Caine, Patrick Cavanagh; dir. Bob Swaim. Poor woman academic works for London escort service. 90m. (R) Hi cc \$79.95. Embassy.

Hotel. 1967. Rod Taylor, Karl Malden, Merle Oberon, Carmen McRae. Soaper based on Arthur Hailey novel. 125m. Hi \$59.95. Warner.

Hotline. 1982. Lynda Carter, Steve Forrest. Phone volunteer threatened by disturbed caller. 96m. \$39.95. U.S.A.

The Informer. 1935. B&W. Victor McLaglen, Margot Grahame, Wallace Ford; dir. John Ford. Irishman betrays closest friend, an IRA leader, to obtain funds for emigration. 91m. \$19.95. VidAmerica.

Lumiere. 1976. Jeanne Moreau, Lucia Bose, Keith Carradine; pr. Roger Corman; wr./dir. Moreau. on and off stage.

York's High School of Fashion. 114m. \$39.95. U.S.A.

My American Cousin. 1986. Margaret Langrick, John Wildman, Richard Donat. Canadian girl infatuated with handsome teenage relative. 94m. (PG) \$79.95. Media.

Out of the Past. 1947. B&W. Robert Mitchum, Kirk Douglas, Rhonda Fleming; dir. Jacques Tourneur. Detective falls in love with runaway girlfriend he's been hired

to track down. 97m. \$19.95. Fox.

Ran. 1985. Tatsuya Nakadai; dir. Akira Kurosawa. Aging monarch's attempt to divide kingdom among three sons leads to bitter rivalry. 160m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox.

Rosie: The Rosemary Clooney Story. 1982. Sondra Locke, Tony Orlando, Kevin McCarthy. TV movie: singer's mental collapse and recovery. 95m. \$39.95. U.S.A.

Rollercoaster. 1977. George Segal, Richard Widmark, Timothy Bottoms, Henry Fonda. Extortionist blows up amusement park attractions. 119m. (PG) Hi \$59.95. MCA.

Saint Joan. 1957. B&W. Jean Seberg, Richard Widmark, John Gielgud; wr. Graham Greene; dir. Otto Preminger. Adaptation of Shaw play about Joan of Arc. 110m. \$29.95. Roach.

NEW VIDEODISC RELEASES

Bells Are Ringing. 1960. Judy Holliday, Dean Martin. Musical. 127m. Dig. St CX \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Howard the Duck. 1986. Lea Thompson, Jeffrey Jones. Adventure comedy. 111m. (PG) ss CX cc \$34.98. MCA.



Club Paradise

See tape entry un-

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. 1984. Harrison Ford, Action Special

Night Patrol. 1985. Murray Langston, Linda Blair. Comedy. 87m. (R) \$34.95. Image.

Poltergeist II: The Other Side. 1986. Craig T. Nelson, JoBeth Williams. Horror. 91m. (PG-13) Dig. ss CX \$34.95. MGM/UA.

Pretty in Pink. 1986. Molly Ringwald, Andrew McCarthy. Teen romance. 96m. (PG-13) Dig. ss CX \$29.95. Paramount.

Running Out of Luck. 1986. Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall. Music. 88m. (R) ss CX \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

Salvador. 1986. James Woods, Jim Belushi. Drama. 123m. (R) cc \$39.95. Vestron.

Star Trek. 1967-68. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy. Series episodes, two per disc: *Wolf in the Fold/The Trouble with Tribbles, The Gamesters of Triskelion/A Piece of the Action, The Immunity Syndrome/A Private Little War, Return to Tomorrow/Patterns of Force, By Any Other Name/The* 102m. ea. \$29.95

ige. 1965. Col. Hunter, Leo V pilot. 73m. mt.

te in Concert. CX \$29.95. Pio-

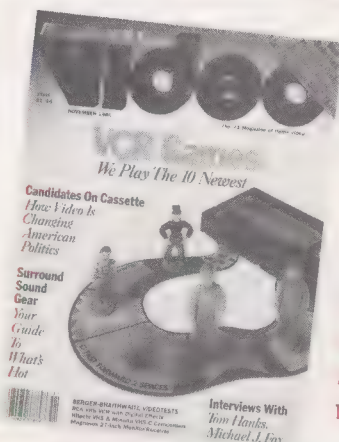
sketeers. 1948. ana Turner. Ac- 9.95. MGM/UA.

1986. Ben Kings- Jackson. Comedy. \$34.95. Vestron.

Blue. 1986. Sissy vin Kline. Drama. -13) cc \$29.95. pia.

stmas. 1954. Bing nny Kaye. Musical. St CX \$39.95. Para-

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Howie Mandel, Paul Sorvino; wr./dir. Blake Edwards. (PG) 100m. ss cc Hi \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

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The NeverEnding Story. 1984. Noah Hathaway, Barre Lyndon, David Warner. 94m. (PG) \$29.95. Warner.

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Fires on the Plain. 1959. B&W. Dir. Kon Ichikawa. Grim study of Japanese soldiers in Philippines at close of WWII. 105m. Hi sub. \$29.95. Embassy.

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Lumiere. 1976. Jeanne Moreau, Lucia Bose, Keith Carradine; pr. Roger Corman; wr./dir. Moreau. Four actresses, on and off stage. 101m. (R) Hi \$29.95. Embassy.

Maedchen in Uniform. 1931. B&W. Dorothea Wieck, Hertha Thiele; dir. Leontine Sagan. Principal punishes girl involved in lesbian affair at Nazi boarding school. 89m. Hi sub. \$29.95. Embassy.

Malou. 1983. Grischa Huber, Ingrid Caven. Woman determined to understand deceased mother's life. 95m. (R) Hi sub. \$29.95. Embassy.

The Maltese Falcon. 1941, czd. 1986. Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Sidney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre; wr./dir. John Huston. Detective involved in ruthless scramble to recover precious statuette. 101m. Hi \$59.98. CBS/Fox.

The Manhattan Project. 1986. John Lithgow, Cynthia Nixon, Jill Eikenberry; dir. Marshall Brickman. High-school student constructs nuclear reactor. 120m. Hi \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Maya. 1982. Berta Dominguez, Joseph D. Rosevich. Popular teacher stirs jealousy at New

York's High School of Fashion. 114m. \$39.95. U.S.A.

My American Cousin. 1986. Margaret Langrick, John Wildman, Richard Donat. Canadian girl infatuated with handsome teenage relative. 94m. (PG) \$79.95. Media.

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Ran. 1985. Tatsuya Nakadai; dir. Akira Kurosawa. Aging monarch's attempt to divide kingdom among three sons leads to bitter rivalry. 160m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox.

Rosie: The Rosemary Clooney Story. 1982. Sondra Locke, Tony Orlando, Kevin McCarthy. TV movie: singer's mental collapse and recovery. 95m. \$39.95. U.S.A.

Rollercoaster. 1977. George Segal, Richard Widmark, Timothy Bottoms, Henry Fonda. Extortionist blows up amusement park attractions. 119m. (PG) Hi \$59.95. MCA.

Saint Joan. 1957. B&W. Jean Seberg, Richard Widmark, John Gielgud; wr. Graham Greene; dir. Otto Preminger. Adaptation of Shaw play about Joan of Arc. 110m. \$29.95. Roach.

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Bells Are Ringing. 1960. Judy Holliday, Dean Martin. Musical. 127m. Dig. St CX \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Howard the Duck. 1986. Lea Thompson, Jeffrey Jones. Adventure comedy. 111m. (PG) ss CX cc \$34.98. MCA.



Club Paradise

Club Paradise. See tape entry under **Comedy**. ss CX \$34.98. Warner.

Color Me Barbra. 1966. Barbra Streisand. TV special. 60m. CX \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

Dont Look Back. 1967. B&W. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez. Music documentary. 95m. \$29.95. Paramount.

8 Million Ways to Die. 1986. Jeff Bridges, Rosanna Arquette. Action. 115m. (R) CX \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

The 400 Blows. 1959. B&W. Dir. Francois Truffaut. Drama. 97m. CX \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman. 1942. B&W. Abbott & Costello. Comedy. Side 2 CAV; includes orig. theatrical trailer, stills. 73m. CX \$29.98. MCA.

Funny Lady. 1974. Barbra Streisand, James Caan. Musical. 137m. St CX \$34.95. RCA/Columbia.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. 1984. Harrison Ford, Kate Capshaw. Action. Special CAV edition (2 discs). 118m. (PG) ss CX cc \$49.95. Paramount.

Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling. 1986. Richard Pryor, Debbie Allen. Drama. 97m. (R) ss CX \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Jolson Story. 1946. Larry Parks, Evelyn Keyes. Drama. 128m. St CX \$34.95. RCA/Columbia.

Jules and Jim. 1961. Dir. Francois Truffaut. Drama. 104m. CX \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

Kiss Me Kate. 1953. Howard Keel, Ann Miller. Musical. 109m. Dig. St CX \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Messiah. 1984. Music, with choir of Westminster Abbey. 145m. Dig. St CX \$49.95. Pioneer.

My Name Is Barbra. 1965. B&W. Barbra Streisand. TV special. 60m. CX \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

Night Patrol. 1985. Murray Langston, Linda Blair. Comedy. 87m. (R) \$34.95. Image.

Poltergeist II: The Other Side. 1986. Craig T. Nelson, JoBeth Williams. Horror. 91m. (PG-13) Dig. ss CX \$34.95. MGM/UA.

Pretty in Pink. 1986. Molly Ringwald, Andrew McCarthy. Teen romance. 96m. (PG-13) Dig. ss CX \$29.95. Paramount.

Running Out of Luck. 1986. Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall. Music. 88m. (R) ss CX \$34.98. CBS/Fox.

Salvador. 1986. James Woods, Jim Belushi. Drama. 123m. (R) cc \$39.95. Vestron.

Star Trek. 1967-68. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy. Series episodes, two per disc: *Wolf in the Fold/The Trouble with Tribbles/The Gamesters of Triskelion/A Piece of the Action/The Immunity Syndrome/A Private Little War, Return to Tomorrow/Patterns of Force, By Any Other Name/The Omega Glory*. 102m. ea. \$29.95 ea. Paramount.

Star Trek: The Cage. 1965. Color/B&W. Jeffrey Hunter, Leonard Nimoy. TV pilot. 73m. \$29.95. Paramount.

Tammy Wynette in Concert. 1986. 60m. St CX \$29.95. Pioneer.

The Three Musketeers. 1948. Gene Kelly, Lana Turner. Action. 125m. \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Turtle Diary. 1986. Ben Kingsley, Glenda Jackson. Comedy. 94m. (PG) ss \$34.95. Vestron.

Violets Are Blue. 1986. Sissy Spacek, Kevin Kline. Drama. 86m. (PG-13) cc \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

White Christmas. 1954. Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye. Musical. 120m. Dig. St CX \$39.95. Paramount.



The Best of Spike Jones Vol. 1

Silent Victory: The Kitty O'Neil Story. 1979. Stockard Channing, Edward Albert, James Farentino, Brian Dennehy. Docu-drama based on life of deaf stunt woman. 96m. \$69.95. VidAmerica.

Utu. 1983. Anzac Wallace, Kelly Johnson, Tim Elliot. Native revolt against British rulers in 19th century New Zealand. 104m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.98. CBS/Fox.

The Very Edge. 1963. B&W. Jeremy Brett, Anne Heywood, Richard Todd. Sexual assault on pregnant woman leads to estrangement from husband. 90m. \$59.95. VidAmerica.

The Winds of Jarrah. 1983. Terence Donovan, Susan Lyons. 78m. \$59.95. Continental.



Cardiac Arrest. 1974. Garry Goodrow, Max Gail. Serial killer removes victims' hearts, sells them to transplant patients. 95m. (PG) \$69.95. Media.

Death in Deep Water. 1974. Bradford Dillman, Suzan Farmer. Plot to murder rich husband leaves wrong man dead. 71m. \$29.95. Thriller.

Die, Monster, Die! 1965. Boris Karloff, Nick Adams. Adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft story: meteorite has strange effects on scientist. 80m. Hi \$79.95. HBO/Cannon.

Eaten Alive. 1976. Carolyn Jones, Mel Ferrer, Stuart Whitman; dir. Tobe Hooper. Hotel owner turns crocodile loose on guests. 97m. (R) Hi \$59.95. Prism.

The Forest. 1983. Dean Russell, Michael Brody, Elaine Warner. Knife-wielding cannibalistic spirit feeds on campers. 90m. Hi \$59.95. Prism.

I'm the Girl He Wants to Kill. 1974. Julie Sommars, Anthony Steel. Murder witness fears she's next. 71m. \$29.95. Thriller.

In the Steps of a Dead Man. 1974. Skye Aubrey, John Nolan. Dead soldier's double does best to ingratiate himself to mourning family. 71m. \$29.95. Thriller.

The Oracle. 1985. Caroline Capers Powers, Roger Neil, Victoria Dryden. Spirit of murder victim possesses young girl. 94m. (R) \$59.95. U.S.A.

Psycho III. 1986. Anthony Perkins, Diana Scarwid, Roberta Maxwell; dir. Perkins. Disturbed motel proprietor Norman Bates back on the job. 93m. (R) Hi ss cc \$79.95. MCA.

The Pyx. 1973. Karen Black, Christopher Plummer, Donald Pilon. Police inspector investigates puzzling cult murder. 111m. (R) Hi \$79.95. Prism.

Screamer. 1974. Pamela Franklin, Donal McCann. Rape victim sees attacker everywhere. 71m. \$29.95. Thriller.

Seven Deaths in the Cat's Eye. 1973. Jane Birkin, Anton Diffring. Strange beast murdering residents of Scottish town. 90m. Hi \$79.95. Prism.

The Vulture. 1967. Broderick Crawford, Akim Tamiroff. Scientist attempting to transfer himself into dead ancestor's body fails to notice bird carcass in same coffin. 92m. \$39.95. Monterey.



American Ballet Theatre in San Francisco. 1985. Five works, including pas de deux from *Romeo and Juliet*. Dancers include Cyn-

thia Gregory, Natalia Makarova. 105m. Hi St \$39.95. Home Vision.

Barry Manilow: The Concert at Blenheim Palace. 1986. Open-air gig taped in England. Features "Mandy," "It's a Miracle," "I Write the Songs," more. 90m. Hi St \$29.95. MusicVision.

The Best of Spike Jones Vol. 1. 1952-57 ('86 comp.). B&W. Comic arrangements of classical and popular music from TV series. 51m. Hi \$29.95. Paramount.

Broadway Melody of 1938. 1937. B&W. Eleanor Powell, Robert Taylor, Judy Garland, George Murphy, Robert Benchley. All-star revue features Garland singing "Dear Mr. Gable." 110m. Hi \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Cruisin' Through the '50s. 1986 comp. B&W. Newsreel footage set to orig. hit recordings. 30m. \$11.95. Simitar.

Godley & Creme History Mix. 1986 comp. dir. Kevin Godley, Lol Creme. Videos featuring Eric Clapton, Graham Parker, Boy George, Howard Jones, Police, others. 18m. \$16.95. MusicVideo.

Incident at Channel Q. 1986. Bon Jovi, Deep Purple, Iron Maiden, Kiss, Motley Crue in conceptual video about rock VJ at odds with townspeople. 85m. Hi St \$29.95. MusicVision.

Krokus: Screaming in the Night. 1986 comp. Videos: "Eat the Rich," "School's Out," more. 31m. Hi St \$19.95. MusicVision.

The Making of Dancing on the Ceiling. 1986. Making of Lionel Richie music video. Appearances by Rodney Dangerfield, director Stanley Donen. 35m. Hi St \$14.95. Karl.

The Michael Schenker Group: Rock Will Never Die. 1986. Heavy metal band in concert. Selections include

"Doctor Doctor," "Armed and Ready," "Rock My Nights Away." 52m. Hi St \$29.95. MusicVideo.

Paul Revere and the Raiders: The Last Mad Man of Rock and Roll. 1986. Concert taped in Reno. Includes "Kicks," "Louie Louie," "We're an American Band," more. 57m. Hi St \$29.95. MCA.

Soundies Vol. 1. 1987 comp. B&W. Musical shorts produced during 1940s, featuring Ozzie Nelson, the Harlem Cuties, Larry Clinton and His Orchestra, others. 57m. \$24.95. Active.

Thank Your Lucky Stars. 1943. B&W. Extravanga with Bette Davis singing "They're Either Too Young or Too Old," Errol Flynn's rendition of "That's What You Jolly Well Get," much more. With Eddie Cantor, Dinah Shore, Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan, John Garfield, Olivia de Havilland. 129m. Hi \$29.95. MGM/UA.

Traffic: Live at Santa Monica. 1972. Eight selections including "Freedom Rider," "The Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys." 64m. Hi St \$29.95. MusicVision.

Ultravox: The Collection. 1986 comp. 12 videos, including "One Small Day," "Dancing with Tears in My Eyes," etc. 54m. Hi St \$29.95. MusicVideo.



The Best of the WWF Vol. 9. 1986 comp. Wrestling highlights: Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat, Corporal Kirshner vs. Nikolai Volkoff, 22-man melee, more. 90m. \$59.95. Coliseum.

Thank Your Lucky Stars





Return of the Great Whales

Billy Kidd: Ski Racing. 1986. Host Billy Kidd. Instruction for all ability levels; pointers on balance, analysis of competition footage. 27m. Hi \$29.95. Prism.

The British Bulldogs. 1986 comp. Look at wrestlers Daveyboy Smith, Dynamite Kid in training, plus match highlights. 90m. \$59.95. Coliseum.

1986 World Series Highlights. 1986. Commentators Vin Scully, Joe Garagiola host excerpts from NBC-TV coverage. 60m. Hi St \$19.95. RCA/Columbia.

WWF's Inside the Steel Cage. 1986 comp. Wrestling action with ring enclosed by 15-foot fence. Matches feature Big John Studd, Randy Savage, Hulk Hogan, others. 90m. \$59.95. Coliseum.



Cowboy Art. 1983. Artists' depiction of the Wild West; commentary

by Barry Goldwater, Professor Barbara Novac. 55m. \$39.95. Home Vision.

David Mamel. 1985. Interview with Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, excerpts from London productions of *American Buffalo*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*. \$39.95. Home Vision.

El Greco. 1982. Career of the Spanish painter, influence of Counter-Reformation on his work. 27m. \$29.95. Home Vision.

Feiffer's Follies. 1982. Visit with satirist Jules Feiffer as he creates installment of syndicated cartoon strip. Hi St \$39.95. Home Vision.

The Hague School. 1983. Documentary on 19th-century Dutch painters who chose nature as subject. 45m. \$39.95. Home Vision.

In the Kingdom of the Dolphins. 1984. Journalist Hardy Jones, biologist Julia Whitty host program filmed during 7 summers of study in Caribbean. 50m. \$39.95. Home Vision.

The Incas Remembered. 1984. Accomplishments of advanced tribe that once ruled South America. Introduction by Edwin Newman. 60m. \$24.95. Monterey.

Joseph Heller. 1984. Profile of the author featuring excerpts from

God Knows. 55m. Hi St \$39.95. Home Vision.

Men of Bronze. 1977. Color/B&W. Tribute to "Rattlesnake Regiment," first group of black soldiers to fight in WWI. Includes interviews with vets, archive footage. 60m. Hi \$39.95. Pacific.

The Princess and the People. 1986. BBC interview with the Princess of Wales. Approx. 60m. \$29.95. Home Vision.

Raphael. Nar. David Thompson. Three-part profile of the painter's career: *The Apprentice Years*, *Prince of Painters*, *Legend and Legacy*. 60m. ea. Hi St \$39.95 ea. Home Vision.

Remembering Life Vols. 1, 2. 1986. Nar. Walter Cronkite. Early years of *Life* magazine; interviews with photographers. 30m. ea. \$11.95 ea. Simitar.

Return of the Great Whales. 1982. Documentary exploring reappearance of whales near San Francisco. 50m. \$39.95. Home Vision.

Scotland Yard. 1971. David Niven hosts documentary on most difficult cases of British investigative agency. 60m. \$24.95. Monterey.

Swimwear Illustrated. 1986. Fashion shoot for *Swimwear* magazine. 45m. \$29.95. Vestron.

PROGRAMMING SOURCES

A&H Video Sales, 430 East 54 St., New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-489-8130.

Active Home Video, 211 South Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212; 213-850-1757.

CBS/Fox Video, 1211 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10036; 212-819-3200.

CC Studios, 389 Newtown Turnpike, Weston, Conn. 06883; 203-226-4666.

Charter Entertainment: see *Embassy*.

Coliseum Video: see *A&H*.

Continental Video, 2320 Cotner, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064; 800-821-3427.

Walt **Disney Home Video**, 500 South Buena Vista St., Burbank, Calif. 91521; 818-840-1111.

Embassy Home Entertainment, 1901 Ave. of the Stars, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067; 213-553-3600.

Fox Hills Video: see *Media*.

HBO/Cannon Home Video, 1370 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-977-8990.

Hi-Tops Video: see *Media*.

Home Vision, 5547 North Ravenswood Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60640-1199; 312-878-2600.

Image Entertainment, 6311 Rome St., Hollywood, Calif. 90038; 800-421-4585.

IVE, 21800 Burbank Blvd. Woodland Hills, Calif. 91365-4062; 818-888-3040, 800-423-7455.

Karl-Lorimar Home Video, 17942 Cowan Ave., Irvine, Calif. 92714; 714-474-0355.

Key Video: see *CBS/Fox*.

Magic Window Video: see *RCA/Columbia*.

MCA Home Video, 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City, Calif. 91608; 818-508-4315.

Media Home Entertainment, 5730 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City, Calif. 90230; 800-421-4509.

MGM/UA Home Video, 1350 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019; 212-408-0600.

Monterey Home Video: see *IVE*.

Vestron **MusicVideo**: see *Vestron*.

MusicVision: see *RCA/Columbia*.

New World Video, 1440 South Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90025; 213-444-8100.

Pacific Arts Video, 50 North La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90211; 213-657-2233.

Paramount Home Video, 5555 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90038-3197; 213-468-5000.

Pioneer Artists, 200 West Grand Ave., Montvale, N.J. 07645; 201-573-1122.

Playhouse Video: see *CBS/Fox*.

Prism Entertainment, 1875 Century Pk. East, Los Angeles, Calif. 90067; 213-277-3270.

RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, 3500 West Olive Ave., Burbank, Calif. 91505; 818-953-7900.

Hal Roach Studio Films Classics, 1600 North Fairfax Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90046; 213-850-0525.

Simitar Entertainment, 7720 West 78 St., Bloomington, Minn. 55435; 612-559-6660.

Thriller Video: see *IVE*.

Trans World Entertainment, 6464 Sunset Blvd., Penthouse Suite, Los Angeles, Calif. 90028; 213-461-0467.

United Home Video, 4111 South Darlington St., Tulsa, Okla. 74135; 918-622-6460, 800-331-4077.

U.S.A., 21800 Burbank Blvd. Woodland Hills, Calif. 91365-4062; 818-888-3040, 800-423-7455.

Vestron Video, 60 Long Ridge Rd., Stamford, Conn. 06907; 203-968-0000.

VidAmerica, 235 East 55 St., New York, N.Y. 10022; 212-355-1600.

Warner Home Video, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91522; 818-954-6000.

BERGER-BRAITHWAITE VIDEO TESTS

March 1987

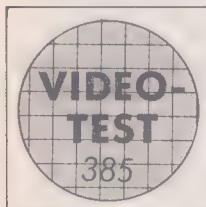
NEC DX-2000U VHS VCR with Digital Effects

Olympus VX-801 Movie 8 8mm Camcorder

Pioneer LD-838D LaserDisc Player with Digital Audio

Marantz VR560HQ Hi-Fi HQ VHS VCR

NEC VHS VCR With Digital Effects



NEC announced two VCRs with digital picture processing at the same time, but the DX-1000U ("Video-tests," Jan. '87), which reached

stores first, was neither Hi-Fi nor stereo. The second, the DX-2000U, is now available and offers not only Hi-Fi stereo sound but MTS broadcast stereo, SAP capability, and a host of other enhancements.

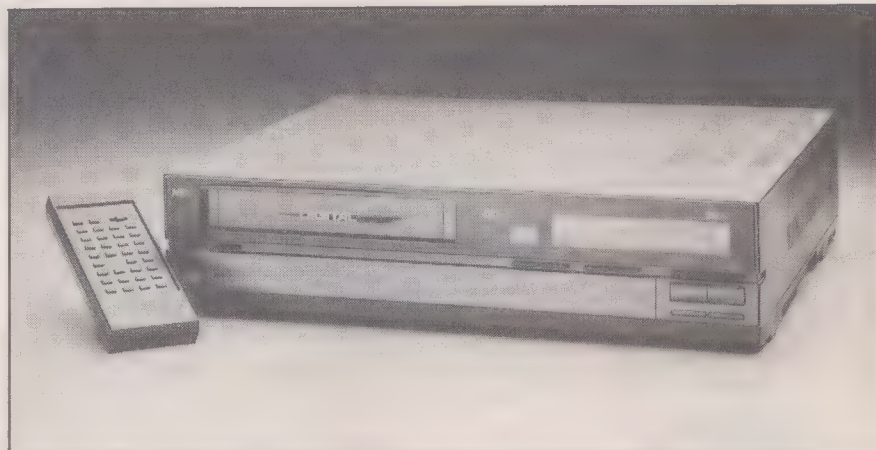
The DX-2000U is a four video head machine. The wider pair of heads are dedicated to record and play at the SP speed. In addition to a reduction in noise at that speed, it delivers less distorted images in the search mode and makes it easier to find segments you want to view.

Like the earlier model, digital circuitry is used to provide still frame, slow, and "digital memory" pictures. The digital memory lets you freeze the action of a tape or TV show while the show itself continues. The digital circuitry also reduces noise, with the effect most noticeable on noisy tapes.

An additional pair of heads on the video head drum is used to record and play the Hi-Fi stereo information. The tuner is able to decode both MTS stereo and SAP signals when they're present in a broadcast. Indicators for Hi-Fi, stereo, SAP/bilingual, and the audio level are on the front panel.

In a compartment are slide switches for TV/simulcast/line input, L/stereo/R Hi-Fi output, Hi-Fi/normal output, stereo/SAP-bilingual linear track record, and the VU/off/tracking level meter. These indicators and switches, and the twin audio input and output jacks on the rear, are the only differences between the 1000 and 2000 models.

Description. The DX-2000U is black



The NEC DX-2000U offers digital picture enhancement with MTS stereo and SAP capability.

with gold legends. It stands 4-1/4 inches high by 17 inches wide by 14-3/4 inches deep, and weighs 17.7 pounds. On a narrow band on the center of the front panel are skinny buttons for power, eject, VCR/TV, digital memory, channel -, channel +, slow, and pause/still. Below are larger buttons for play and stop, with more skinny buttons below those for rewind, fast forward, and search.

Above the center band are the cassette hatch, a comprehensive LCD display, and LED indicators for digital quality, Hi-Fi, stereo, and SAP/bilingual. The LED bar graph for Hi-Fi level/tracking is also nearby.

The tuner preset controls are in a compartment in the lower front panel. Next to them are a slide switch for normal/preset operation, buttons for scan and memory/shift, a stereo phone jack, a volume control, and rotary controls for tracking and sharpness. Set on a blue background are an on/off switch for the digital noise reduction and a level control.

Near the center of the compartment are the new audio controls with the switches for TV/simul/line input, L/Stereo/R Hi-Fi output, Hi-Fi/normal output, tuner stereo/SAP-bilingual, and level meter function

VU/off/tracking. There are also controls for segment record, record, timer record, and a slide switch for SP/LP/EP record speed selection. Playback speed selection is automatic.

A second group of buttons regulates the timer, the time/counter display and the counter memory and reset. An onscreen display provides operating mode and programming information on your TV screen and is most useful for programming the timer from the remote control.

The rear panel houses the AC cord, an AC accessory socket, UHF input and output terminals, the VHF input and output, the channel 3/4 RF output selector, and RCA-type pin jacks for video and stereo audio input and output.

The remote control, model RB-D10, is identical to the one for the DX-1000U VCR. In addition to controlling the two VCRs, it provides basic controls for some recent NEC monitor/receivers and projection systems. A switch near the front determines whether it will control the VCR or a TV.

There are buttons for power, eject, channel +, channel -, a 10-digit keypad, onscreen display, channel recall, the timer mode, a sleep timer, shift -, shift +, TV/

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Videotests

VCR (TV/video), counter/timer (ant/aux), counter reset, mute, record, timer record, stop, rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, slow, volume down and up, digital memory/frame advance, and pause/still. The parenthetical functions are for monitor/receivers and projection systems.

Operation. Even though there are more controls, it was easier to use than the DX1000, partly because we had become

accustomed to the skinny buttons. NEC also fixed one problem: you can now leave cables in the input jacks without disabling the tuner, thanks to the input selector switch. The audio controls are easy to use, but the more sophisticated will miss optional manual Hi-Fi level controls. The remainder is plain sailing even though the manual is sometimes cryptic in its explanations. If you need to, you can experiment

with a spare tape. We rate ease of operation as very good/excellent.

Performance. Digital noise reduction is an even bigger plus than the digital still, the frame-grabbing digital memory, or the near perfect slow motion, but don't expect too much. On noisy tapes, the outcome is nearly miraculous; however, on nearly perfect tapes, the improvement is barely noticeable. The DX-2000U is also an HQ

Test Report: NEC DX-2000U VHS HQ Hi-Fi VCR with Digital Effects and MTS

DATA

Date of test: December 1986

Suggested price: \$819

Weight: 17.7 pounds

Dimensions: 4-1/4 x 17 x 14-3/4 inches (h/w/d)

Power requirements: 120 VAC, 60 Hz

Power consumption: 40 W

Tape format: VHS HQ Hi-Fi

Tape speeds: SP, LP, EP

Play speed select: automatic

Still frame: yes, digitally stored

Frame advance: yes, digitally stored

Slow motion: 1/3x, digitally stored

Speed play: no

Cue & review: standard search—4/7/9 at SP/LP/EP; jet search—8/14/21 at SP/LP/EP

Visible FF and Rew: no

Fast forward/rewind time: 3 min., 10 sec. for T-120

Remote (camera) pause: no

Remote: IR wireless with buttons for power, eject, channel up and down, digits 0 to 9, on screen, timer mode, shift + and -, TV/VCR, counter/timer, reset, record timer record, stop, rewind (search),

play, fast forward (search), slow, digital memory/still advance, and pause/still, and a switch to control some NEC TVs

Separate eject: yes

Counter digits: 4

Counter memory: yes

Program start locator/index/cue: no

Audio dub: no

Video dub: no

Auto rewind: yes

Linear audio: mono

Hi-Fi audio: stereo

Tuning method: voltage synthesis, 110 channel capable, 40 presets

Channel selectors: up/down scan on VCR; scan plus direct access on remote

Preset method: scan to channel, set channel number, memorize

Broadcast tuning range: 2 to 6, 7 to 13, 14 to 83

Cable tuning range: 2 to 13, A-5 to A-1, A to W

AFT: automatic

MTS stereo: yes

SAP: yes

Channel lock: yes

Timer: 4-event/21-day

Auto channel-change: yes

Accessories: remote control and batteries, 75-ohm cable with integral matching transformer, 300-ohm twin lead cable, and 300- to 75-ohm transformer

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 240+ lines, measured

S/N, video luminance: rated—43 dB digital, NR off; measured—42.9 dB/43.0 dB/42.0 dB, SP/LP/EP, unweighted, NR off; 57 dB/46.7 dB/46.6 dB, SP/LP/EP, weighted, NR on

S/N, chroma AM: 41.5 dB/41.6 dB/39.2 dB, SP/LP/EP

S/N, chroma PM: 39.9 dB/40.5 dB/38.2 dB, SP/LP/EP

Audio frequency response: rated—20-20,000 Hz, Hi-Fi; 100-10,000 Hz, linear; measured—20-20,000 Hz, +/-0.4 dB, all speeds, Hi-Fi; 63-12,000 Hz, +4.1/-3 dB, SP; 63-10,000 Hz, +5.2/-3 dB, LP; 63-5000 Hz, +5.3/-3 dB, EP, linear

Dynamic range: rated—90 dB; measured—76 dB

S/N, audio: rated—more than 40 dB; measured—46 dB

Audio distortion: measured—0.4%, Hi-Fi; 2.3%, linear

Overall picture quality: very good/excellent

Audio quality: very good/excellent, Hi-Fi; very good, linear

Ease of operation: very good/excellent

Overall performance: very good/excellent

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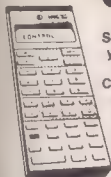


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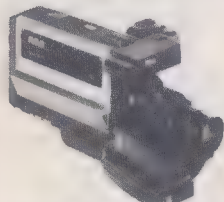
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machine with an extended white clip level and detail enhancement, so those circuits also provide a snappier picture with clean rather than ragged edges.

It delivers 240+ lines of horizontal resolution with a 43 decibel unweighted video signal-to-noise ratio, with the noise reduction off. Weighted and with sag compensation the video S/N is 57, 46.7, and 46.6 dB at SP, LP, and EP speeds, respectively. The noise reduction varies with the control setting and the quality of the recorded material, but did not exceed the measurements attained with clean signals and the noise reduction off. The chroma AM S/N was 41.5 dB, and chroma PM S/N was 39.9 dB at SP. Overall video performance was very good/excellent.

Hi-Fi performance was very good/excellent with a 20 to 20,000 Hertz frequency response flat with +/-0.4 dB. That's among the best we've measured. The dynamic range was rated at 90 dB, but measured at 76 dB—still a creditable performance. The total harmonic distortion was

0.4 percent.

Linear track performance was a bit less spectacular, mainly because there was a pronounced hump at the top of the frequency range before it fell off, rather than because of the range itself, which was excellent. At SP, it was 63 to 12,000 Hz, +4.1/-3 dB. The responses at LP and EP speeds are detailed in the "Test Report." Audio S/N, linear, was 46 dB, and total harmonic distortion was 2.3 percent. We rate linear track performance as very good.

Conclusion. Overall, the DX-2000U is a very good to excellent VCR with the digital circuitry used to improve the playback quality of noisy tapes in addition to producing excellent still, slow, and digital memory effects. It is a praiseworthy use of digital power. It has fewer features than the most exotic VCRs but, for general recording and playback, is near the top. Combined with an \$819 suggested price, it is an extremely good value. We recommend it highly for those who don't need every bell and whistle.

Olympus 8mm Camcorder



The Olympus Movie 8, at 3.3 pounds with battery, is one of the lightest camcorders currently available. It offers all the most popular camcorder

features, including a 6x zoom lens, back-light compensation, auto focus, auto fade, and auto iris. It is an easy-to-use, lightweight camcorder that can fit into a briefcase, a purse, or even some coat pockets.

Description. The VX-801-KU is black and bluish-gray with a few touches of color in the legends and controls. Its overall dimensions are 5-3/8 inches high by 4-7/8

wide by 10-1/8 deep.

The camcorder must be held in the right hand because of its fixed grip on the right side. The run/pause button is directly below your right thumb and the wide angle and tele power zoom buttons are under your index and middle fingers. A security strap wraps around your hand for extra support and safety. The hand grip also has a mini-jack for an external mic and an earphone mini-jack for monitoring as you record or play a tape.

The lens has the usual rings for manual focus and zoom, with a separate button for the macro focusing range on the zoom ring. A hook on the lens cap cord lets you stow it away while shooting so it doesn't dangle.



Olympus' ultra-light VX-801-KU camcorder offers a host of features.

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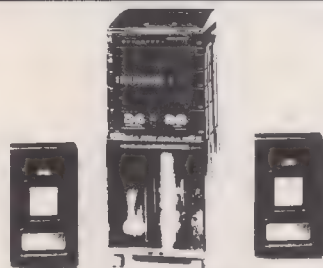
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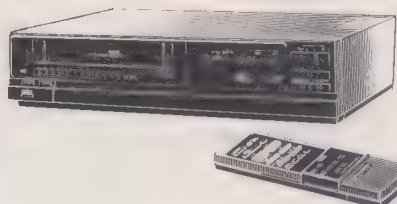


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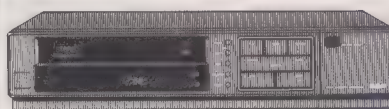


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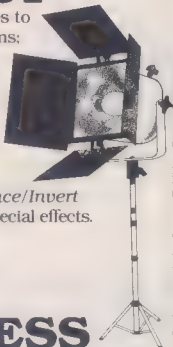
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Videotests

Test Report: Olympus Movie 8 VX-801-KU 8mm Camcorder

DATA

Date of test: December 1986
Suggested retail price: \$1850
Weight: 2.9 pounds, camcorder less battery and cassette; 0.4 lbs., battery; 1 lb., VF-BA81-U battery charger/AC adapter
Dimensions: 5-3/8 x 4-7/8 x 10-1/8 inches (h/w/d), camcorder; 1-3/8 x 9-1/4 x 3-9/16 inches (h/w/d), charger/adapter
Power requirements: 7.2 VDC, camcorder; 120 VAC, 50/60 Hz, charger/adapter
Power consumption: 7 W approx., camcorder; 22 W approx., charger/adapter
Image sensor: solid state, 1/2-inch CCD
Lens: f/1.2, 6x (9-54mm) power zoom with macro focusing
Filter diameter: 49mm
Minimum focusing distance: 4 feet, plus macro range
Minimum illumination: rated, 7 lux; measured 7.4 lux for 50 IRE
Autofocus: yes, switchable to manual with one-shot AF capability
White balance: auto, switchable to indoor (3200 K) or outdoor (5500 K)
Iris: auto with press and hold backlight compensation button
Sensitivity: single range 7 to 100,000 lux
Viewfinder: fixed electronic with flip-up focusing magnifier; on-screen bar to indicate iris opening, and LEDs to indicate record/battery warning and auto white balance off
Viewfinder controls: focus lever for magnifier
Auto fade: semi auto
VCR controls: all, unitized
Microphone: unidirectional electret condenser
Cable length: none
Plug: none
Jacks: mic, earphone minijacks, multi-pin adapter
Tape format: 8mm
Tape speeds: SP only

Still frame: yes
Frame advance: yes
Slow motion: no
Speed play: no
Cue & review: 7x, forward and reverse
Visible FF and Rew: no
Fast forward/rewind time: 3 min for P6-90
Remote pause: no
Remote: none
Separate eject: yes
Counter digits: 4
Counter memory: yes
Program start locator/index/cue: no
Audio dub: no
Video dub: insert, also replaces audio
Auto rewind: yes
Linear audio: none
Hi-Fi audio: mono AFM
Accessories: supplied—VF-BA81-U A/V/RF/AC adapter/battery charger, VF-BP81-U 1-hour battery (1-hour recharge), shoulder strap, A/V output connector, A/V cable, earphone, VHF RF cable, and 300-75 ohm transformer; optional—car battery cord, extension cable, ND filters, carrying case

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 240 lines approx., measured
S/N, video luminance: 37.7 dB, unweighted; 37.9 dB, weighted; 56.3 dB, with sag compensation
S/N, chroma AM: 40.1 dB
S/N, chroma PM: 40.4 dB
Audio frequency response: 25-16,000 Hz, -3 dB; 20-20,000 Hz, +0.05/-6.97 dB
Dynamic range: 77.1 dB
Audio distortion: 0.3 percent
Overall picture quality: very good/excellent
Audio quality: good
Ease of operation: very good
Overall performance: very good/excellent

estal just 1-3/8 inches high by 9-1/4 wide by 3-5/8 inches deep. On its front are a power switch and indicator, the TV/video switch, and a VTR/charge switch with an indicator.

The TV/video switch is coupled to the power switch so that the TV position is automatically selected when power is switched off. This is useful if you feed a TV through the RF input, but annoying if you feed a monitor through the audio and video outputs. Then you have an extra switch to set every time you want to play a tape. The top of the adapter has a covered battery charging socket and rubber pads on which the camcorder sits.

On the bottom is the channel 3/4 RF output selector. At the right is the cable to connect the camcorder plus an auxiliary terminal. At the back are the power cord, RCA-type pin jacks for audio/video input and output, plus F connectors for VHF

input and output.

Operation. The VX-801 offers point and shoot simplicity. Cassette eject opens the cassette hatch, but to remove the cassette you must press a release near the back edge of the cassette. Backlight compensation and fade require that the buttons be held down while those features are on. This presents no problem unless you want to fade into or out of a backlit scene, but the buttons are close to each other so even that is not too difficult. Otherwise the Movie 8 is so easy to use it's almost effortless.

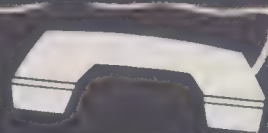
Performance. The VX-801 delivers nearly 240 lines of horizontal resolution with a video signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) of 37.7 decibels, unweighted, and 56.3 dB, weighted with sag compensation. Its chroma AM S/N is 40.1 dB, and its chroma PM S/N is 40.4 dB. Its overall picture quality is very good/excellent.



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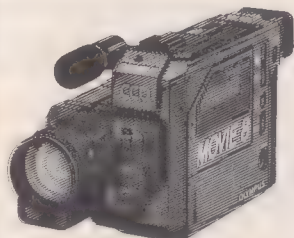


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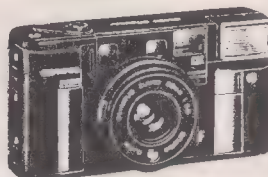
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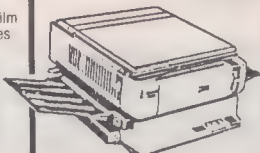
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Videotests

It offers only a mono AFM audio signal with an audio frequency response of 25 to 16,000 Hertz at the -3 dB points, and it covers the entire audio range within +0.05 to -7 dB. Its dynamic range is 77.1 dB and the total harmonic distortion is 0.03 percent. Audio performance is good by 8mm AFM standards.

Conclusion. The Olympus VX-801-KU Movie 8 system is a compact, light, easy-

to-use camcorder with the most desirable features: autofocus, auto fade, auto white balance, and backlight compensation. It delivers many advanced playback features including 7x search, still, frame advance, and insert edit. At a suggested retail price of \$1850, it may be a bit pricey, but it delivers the features and compactness many camcorder users desire. It is well worth your consideration.

Pioneer LaserDisc Player



When we reviewed Pioneer's CLD-909 LV/CD player last June, we marvelled at both its price and its performance. Now, Pioneer has followed up with

the LD-838D. It doesn't have CD capability, but leaves you with huge savings to spend on a separate CD player if you prefer.

The new player will play all LV discs, including those with digital audio, using new digital filters that improve sound quality. The player boasts fully powered loading, with a drawer that automatically slides all the way out and all the way back in at the touch of a button. It has 10-event chapter programming and can now repeat selections by segment, chapter, or side. The on-screen displays are expanded, and CX on/off, auto digital/analog, and TV/LVP selection are moved from the player to the remote control.

The LD-838D will work with any of the Pioneer SR system remote controls, and is smaller and lighter than most LV players. Our only suggestions are that Pioneer should have gold-plated the digital audio jacks and improved the chroma PM signal-to-noise ratio. It still delivers the best picture and sound quality available to a consumer.

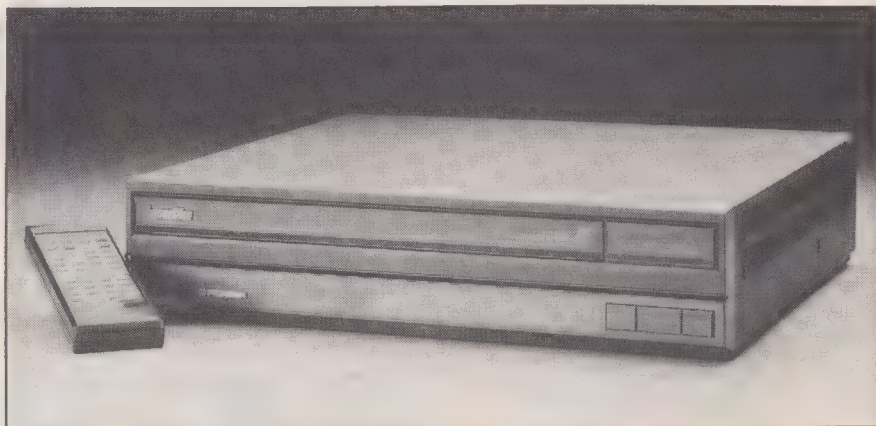
Description. The 19-pound LD-838D measures just 4 inches high by 16-1/2 wide by 15-7/8 deep. It's smaller than the CLV-

900 and CLV-909—the two previous models capable of playing digital LV discs—and about the size of the LD-700, the first player to use a solid-state laser.

Its front panel offers the basic necessities for controlling the player, with buttons for power, reverse scan play/pause, and forward scan, and indicators for digital audio present, LV player active, CX noise reduction on, standby/play, and disc set. The upper front panel contains the powered disc drawer and a large open/close button.

The top, bottom, and sides are bare, while the rear panel bears the channel 3/4 RF output selector. Above the output selector are connectors for VHF in and out. Routing the VHF signal through the player permits automatic source switching when the player is active. The rear also houses the power cord and RCA-type pin jacks for video out, analog audio out, and digital/analog audio out. The player automatically switches to digital audio when those signals are available; however, you can force the player to deliver the analog tracks on a digital disc by using the auto digital/analog button on the remote control.

The major controls for the player are divided into three groups on the remote. Furthest forward, on a medium gray background, are the orange power button and gray buttons for analog audio monitor, CX defeat, auto digital/analog audio, TV/LVP selector, and repeat A and B. The A button is used to mark the beginning of a segment you want repeated; B marks the end and



Pioneer's LD-838D LaserDisc Player uses digital filters for excellent sound quality.

Vision Break-through

When I put on the pair of glasses what I saw I could not believe. Nor will you.



They look like sunglasses.

By Joseph Sugarman

I am about to tell you a true story. If you believe me, you will be well rewarded. If you don't believe me, I will make it worth your while to change your mind. Let me explain.

Len is a friend of mine who has an eye for good products. One day he called excited about a pair of sunglasses he owned. "It's so incredible," he said, "when you first look through a pair, you won't believe it."

"What will I see?" I asked. "What could be so incredible?"

Len continued, "When you put on these glasses, your vision improves. Objects appear sharper, more defined. Everything takes on an enhanced 3-D effect. And it's not my imagination. I just want you to see for yourself."

When I received the sunglasses and put them on I couldn't believe my eyes. I kept taking them off and putting them on to see if indeed what I was seeing through the glasses was indeed actually sharper or if my imagination was playing tricks on me. But my vision improved. It was obvious. I kept putting on my cherished \$100 pair of high-tech sunglasses and comparing them. They didn't compare. I was very impressed. Everything appeared sharper, more defined and indeed had a greater three dimensional look to it. But what did this product do that made my vision so much better? I found out.

DEPRESSING COLOR

The Perception sunglasses (called BluBlockers) filter out the ultraviolet and blue spectrum light waves from the sun. You've often heard the color blue used for expressions of bad moods such as "blue Monday" or "I have the blues." Apparently, the color blue, for centuries, has been considered a rather depressing color.

For eyesight, blue is not a good color too. There are several reasons. First, the blue rays have one of the shortest wavelength in the visible spectrum (red

is the longest). As a result, the color blue will focus slightly in front of the retina which is the "focussing screen" onto which light waves fall in your eye. By eliminating the blue from the sunglasses through a special filtration process, and only letting those rays through that indeed focus clearly on the retina, objects appear to be sharper and clearer.

The second reason is even more impressive. It is not good to have ultraviolet rays fall on our eyes. Recognized as bad for skin, uv light is worse for eyes and is believed to play a role in many of today's eye diseases. In addition, people with contact lenses are at greater risk because contacts tend to magnify the light at their edges thus increasing the sun's harmful effects.

Finally, by eliminating the blue and uv light during the day, your night vision improves. The purple pigment in your eye called Rhodopsin is affected by blue light and the eyes take hours to recover from the effects.

SUNGLASS DANGER

But what really surprised me was the danger in conventional sunglasses. Our pupils close in bright light to limit the light entering the eye and open wider at night—just like the aperture in an automatic camera. So when we put on sunglasses, although we reduce the amount of light that enters our eyes, our pupils open wider and we are actually allowing more of the blue and ultraviolet portions of the light spectrum into our eyes.

BluBlockers sunglasses are darker at the top to shield out overhead light. The lens used is the CR-39 which most eye doctors will tell you is one of the finest materials you can use for glasses and is manufactured under license.

The frames are some of the most comfortable I have ever worn. The moulded nose rest will fit any nose. The hinge causes the frames to rest comfortably on your face and can be adjusted for almost

any size face.

We also have a clip-on pair that weighs less than one ounce. Both come with a padded carrying case and an anti-scratch coating.

I urge you to order a pair and experience the improved vision. Then take your old sunglasses and compare them to the BluBlockers. See how much clearer and sharper objects appear with BluBlockers. And see if your night vision doesn't improve as a direct result. If you don't see a dramatic difference in your vision—one so noticeable that you can tell immediately, then send them back anytime within 30 days and I will send you a prompt and courteous refund.

DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE

But from what I've personally witnessed, once you use a pair, there will be no way you'll want to return it.

Astronomers from many famous universities wear BluBlockers to improve their night vision. Pilots, golfers, skiers, athletes—anyone who spends a great deal of time in the sun have found the BluBlockers indispensable.

Our eyes are very important to us. Protect them and at the same time improve your vision with the most incredible breakthrough in sun glasses since they were first introduced. Order a pair or two at no obligation, today.

To order, credit card holders call toll free and ask for product by number shown below or send a check plus \$4 for delivery.

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Clip-On Model (0024GGN) 39.95

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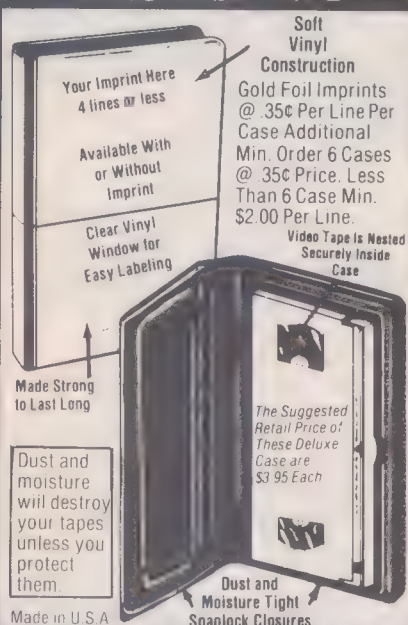
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Videotests

starts the repeat. A single push of the B button repeats the chapter being viewed, and two pushes repeats the side being played.

In the middle group, on a light gray background, are buttons for pause, chapter skip forward, chapter skip reverse, scan forward, scan reverse, play, still/step forward, still/step reverse, multi speed forward, multi speed reverse, multi speed -, and multi speed +. The + and - buttons let you select the play speed.

The third group of controls, on a medium gray background, include a 10-digit keypad and buttons for search/memory, clear, display, program, and chapter/frame/time.

Operation. The middle group of controls on the remote lets you pause the player with no picture, still the picture, step through the still picture in forward or reverse, play at various speeds without sound, scan with picture at about 60x, and skip through the disc a chapter at a time in forward or reverse. The entire repertoire of functions is available only on CAV and the new LDD discs; still, step, and multi speed play are not possible on CLV and standard digital discs.

The search and program play controls are nearest the operator. Search lets you jump to a selection by chapter number, by frame on LDD digital and CAV discs, or by minute and second on CLV or standard digital discs. Just press the search button, select chapter or frame/time, enter the appropriate digits, and press search again. Presto, you're where you want to be in a

few seconds.

You may also play up to 10 chapters in any order by pressing the program button, entering the two-digit chapter numbers and the memory/search button, and repeating the process up to 10 times. A touch of the play button starts the programmed sequence. Legends and the numbers entered appear on the screen to aid these operations. Chapter and frame number or chapter and time can also be called up on-screen. The clear button removes displays from the screen and cancels programmed operation or the repeat function.

Among the buttons at the top of the remote are auto digital/analog, which lets you force manual playback, and analog audio monitor, which lets you choose stereo or feed either the left or the right signal to both audio output channels. Overall, the controls are easy to use, and having the drawer slide all of the way out reduces the fuss of getting the disc into the player. We rate ease of operation as excellent.

Performance. The picture quality equals the performance of earlier LV players in most criteria, and betters them on the video signal-to-noise ratio at 45.1 decibels, unweighted. Horizontal resolution is quoted at 370 lines only because there is no test disc that delivers higher. (We used the Pioneer M1 reference discs and some earlier test discs.) Chroma AM S/N was measured at 44.7 dB, and chroma PM S/N at 38.3 dB. Although the chroma PM S/N is about 2 dB lower than the best measured on a consumer VCR, the picture is still the

Test Report: Pioneer LD-838D Laservision Player with Digital Sound

DATA

Date of test: December 1986

Suggested retail price: \$550

Weight: 19 lbs.

Dimensions: 4 x 16-1/2 x 15-7/8 inches (h/w/d)

Power requirements: 120 VAC, 60 Hz

Power consumption: 38 W

Format: LV

Play speeds: CAV, CLV, Digital

Play speed select: automatic

Still frame: yes

Frame advance: still step—forward and reverse

Slow motion: multi speed—1/2x, 1/4x, 1/8x, 1/16x, step 1 (frame per second), step 3 (frame per 3 seconds)

Speed play: multi speed—3x, 2x

Rapid search: 60x approx. scan, chapter skip forward and reverse, chapter/frame/time search depending on disc

Repeat: four mode—segment, chapter, side, memory (up to 10 segments)

Fast forward/rewind time: 30 seconds

Remote: IR wireless

Separate eject: yes

Counter digits: 5-digit frame, CAV; minutes: seconds, CLV/digital

Program start locator/index/cue:

time/chapter/frame, chapter next/last

Analog audio: stereo

Digital audio: stereo

Accessories: remote control

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: rated—400 lines; measured—360 lines

S/N, video luminance: 45 dB, unweighted, measured

S/N, chroma AM: 44.7 dB

S/N, chroma PM: 38.3 dB

Audio frequency response: rated—4 to 20,000 Hz, +0.5/-1.0 dB; measured—10-20,000 Hz, +0.13/-0.84 dB, digital audio; 20-20,000 Hz, +0.0/-4.19 dB, analog audio

S/N, audio: rated—98 dB; measured—96.7 dB, digital; 66.9 dB, analog

Stereo separation: measured—86.2 dB, digital; 54.8 dB, analog

Audio distortion: measured—less than 0.1 percent, digital; less than 1.2 percent, analog

Overall picture quality: excellent

Audio quality: excellent

Ease of operation: excellent

Overall performance: excellent

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| C <input type="checkbox"/> JVC | G <input type="checkbox"/> Polaroid | N <input type="checkbox"/> Sony |
| D <input type="checkbox"/> Maxell | H <input type="checkbox"/> RCA | |

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| 5 <input type="checkbox"/> JVC | A <input type="checkbox"/> Panasonic | F <input type="checkbox"/> Zenith |

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5. Do you subscribe to cable television? ☐ Yes ☐ No

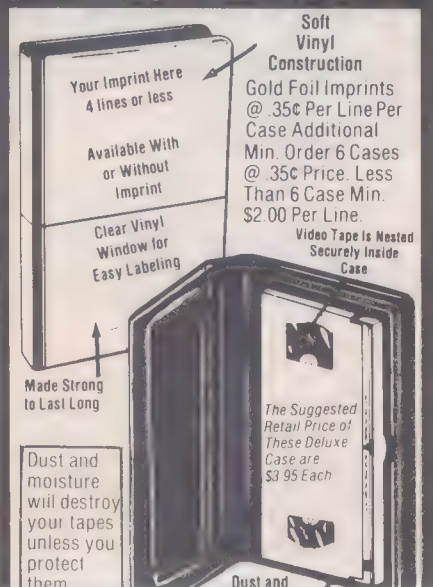
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Performance. The picture quality equals the performance of earlier LV players in most criteria, and betters them on the video signal-to-noise ratio at 45.1 decibels, unweighted. Horizontal resolution is quoted at 370 lines only because there is

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Videotests

finest home delivery systems have to offer except for broadcast and cable programming at their best.

The LD-838D has better audio than anything except a CD player. Its frequency response is flat within +0.12/-0.84 dB from 10 Hertz to 20 kilohertz, and it is specified to deliver down to 4 Hertz. Audio S/N, digital, at 96.7 dB is so close to the specified 98 dB that we won't quibble. Stereo separation is 86.2 dB. Total harmonic distortion was measured at 0.1 per-

cent, with the disc likelier to have caused the noise than the player.

Analog audio also beat all other video systems with a frequency response of 20 Hertz to 19,000 Hertz, -3dB, and 20 to 20,000 Hertz, +0.0/-4.2 dB. Analog audio S/N is 66.9 dB, stereo separation is 54.8 dB, and total harmonic distortion is less than 1.2 percent with the test discs again more suspect than the player. In short, each type of audio is excellent.

Conclusion. The Pioneer LD-838D is

an all-around excellent performer that plays the digital sound on discs with digital audio. It offers all the features of the CLD-909 except CD capability at a savings of \$300. If you already have a CD player or prefer separate machines, this LV player is a steal. We recommend it strongly.

Marantz HQ VHS VCR



Marantz built its reputation in Hi-Fi and, more recently, has won notice for its elaborate audio/video consoles. It was also the only company to offer a

Beta machine with stereo linear tracks and Dolby C noise reduction ("Videotests," May 1983) in the U.S. Since then, Marantz has switched to VHS. The VR560HQ VCR features Hi-Fi sound, an MTS (multichannel television sound) decoder with SAP (second audio program) capability, and HQ circuitry for pictures with more sharply defined edges.

The VR560HQ has four video heads for better special effects with lower noise, especially at SP speed. There are two Hi-Fi audio heads on the video head drum, and the linear audio tracks are stereo with Dolby (B) noise reduction. The 140-channel, cable-compatible MTS tuner has dbx noise reduction, so it will record broadcast stereo on either the Hi-Fi or the linear tracks. It will record SAP on the right channel with mono main audio on the left. To round out its major features, the VR560HQ has an 8-event/21-day programmable timer with an on-screen display.

The VCR also features two-speed search at LP and EP. It offers both fixed- and variable-level audio output, so you can control playback volume from the remote, even if you're using another brand of TV. The IR wireless remote, which also operates some Marantz TVs, controls a very wide range of VCR functions, including timed segment record, timer record, input switching, and timer programming. Luxury features include program start locator, auto-on when a cassette is inserted, eject with power off, edit output for better dubs, variable headphone level, and a counter switchable to indicate time remaining.

Description. The Marantz VR560HQ is black with gold logos and legends. Weighing 19.2 pounds, it is 4-1/8 inches high by 17 wide and 14-3/8 deep.

The top left area of the front panel has the cassette hatch with two rows of buttons for stereo/left/right audio output, Hi-Fi/normal audio output, stereo/SAP-bilingual, counter/time remaining, memo-

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Videotests

ry/PS program start locator, and reset/cancel. The Hi-Fi/normal button lets you select tracks, and stereo/SAP-bilingual determines what is recorded. The power and eject buttons are in the middle of the left side, followed by a very wide display area.

The top right corner of the front panel has four rows of controls divided into two groups. The first group has buttons for play, stop, rewind/reverse search, fast forward/forward search, pause/still, channel +, channel -, TV/VCR, and sliders for manually adjusting the Hi-Fi recording level. In the second group are buttons for record, segment record, and frame advance/slow - and slow +, the sensor for the IR remote control, and a LED indicator for the audio output level.

A flip-down door along the bottom opens a compartment with additional controls. At far left is a switch to change the recording level indicator in the display area into a Hi-Fi tracking adjustment guide. To its right are sliders for tracking and slow tracking, followed by a switch for edit/detail/standard video output. The edit position removes the high frequency filters for better dubbing; the detail position modifies them for a slightly sharper picture with slightly higher noise. This is followed by switches for Dolby NR (on linear audio) and T-120/T-160 for the time remaining indicator. Four buttons set the clock and timer, and the remaining four are for TV/simulcast/line input selection, SP/LP/EP record speed selection, timer record, and all clear. The latter empties all memories in the VCR. Farthest right are sliders for picture sharpness and headphone level. To the right of the door is a 1/4-inch stereo headphone jack.

While the sides are bare, the bottom has a vertical lock control, and the top has a compartment for programming the tuner with sliding switches for normal/standard cable/HRC cable channel spacings, and preset/skip.

The remote control will operate some Marantz TVs as well as the VCR, and a slide switch on its right front determines which signals are sent out. The remaining buttons send commands for power, eject, scan tuning, 10-digit keypad tuning, programming input selection, record speed (mode), AM/PM or stereo/SAP, time remaining/shift, memory/PS, TV/VCR, segment record (2 buttons), timer record (2 buttons), stop, rewind/review, play, fast forward/cue, record (2 buttons), pause/still, CM/skip (deleting commercials), volume, slow speed -, and slow speed +. The keypad and scan buttons double for the days of the week, week 1, week 2, week 3, every week, and every day during programming. All programming can be done from the remote.

Operation. As with any deluxe VCR, a long list of features demands a large num-

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Test Report: Marantz VR560HQ VHS Hi-Fi HQ VCR with MTS Tuner

DATA

Date of test: December 1986
Suggested retail price: \$1000
Weight: 19.2 pounds
Dimensions: 4-1/8 x 17 x 14-3/8 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 120 VAC, 60Hz
Power consumption: 41 W, max
Tape format: VHS Hi-Fi HQ
Tape speeds: SP, LP, EP (SLP)
Play speed select: automatic
Still frame: yes
Frame advance: yes
Slow motion: 1/5x, 1/10x, 1/30x
Speed play: no
Rapid search: see Cue & review
Cue & review: 7x, SP; 7 & 14x, LP; 9 & 21x, EP
Visible FF and Rew: no
Fast forward/rewind time: 3-1/2 minutes for T-120
Remote pause: no
Remote: IR wireless with a switch for TV/VCR control and buttons for power and eject; 10-digit keypad and channel up and down that double for days of the week, week 1, week 2, week 3, every week and every day; program (timer); input (ant/aux); mode (recall); AM-PM/stereo-SAP; TV-VCR (TV-video); mem-PS cueing; reset (mute); remaining/shift; segment record, two buttons; timer record, two buttons; stop; rewind/reverse search; play; fast forward/forward search; record, 2 buttons; pause/still; CM/skip, 30 second fast forward; volume + and -; slow -, and slow +
Separate eject: yes
Counter digits: 4
Counter memory: yes
Program start locator/index/cue: PS cue
Audio dub: no
Video dub: no
Auto rewind: yes
Linear audio: stereo
Hi-Fi audio: stereo
Tuning method: frequency synthesis
Channel selectors: programmable up/down scan on VCR, scan plus keypad direct access on remote
Preset method: write/erase from scan memory
Broadcast tuning range: 2 to 13, 14 to 83
Cable tuning range: 2 to 13, A to W, AA to WW, AAA to FFF, A-5 to A-1
AFT: yes
Channel lock: yes
Timer: 8 event/21 days
Auto channel-change: yes
Accessories: remote control with batteries, still adjustment tool, audio cable, antenna cables and transformer

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 240 lines, rated and measured
S/N, video luminance: 43.3/42.4/41.8 dB (SP/LP/EP), unweighted; 47.8/47.5/46.1 dB, weighted; 55.7/53.4/47.4 dB,

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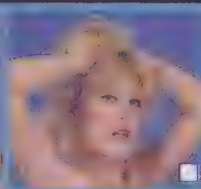
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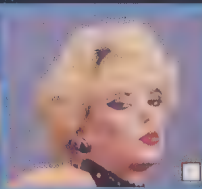
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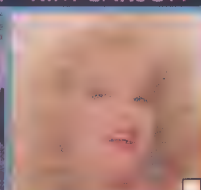
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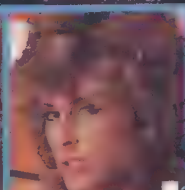
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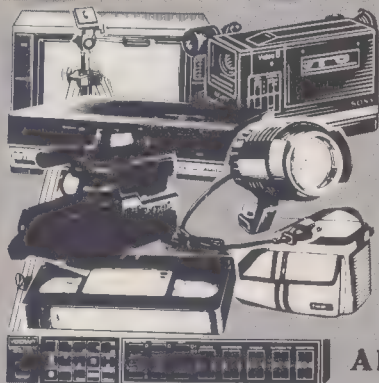
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Audio quality: very good/excellent
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Overall performance: very good

ber of controls. Marantz chose to have many front panel controls and a few hidden in compartments. Most of the exposed ones are fairly common even if their names may be unusual. At LP and EP speeds a second push of the cue (fast forward) or review (rewind) buttons initiates a second, faster search speed. Record and timed segment record are both single buttons without a safety—not wise for the careless. The slow button doubles as frame advance. The input switching is possible from the remote control while output switching is not, which seems unwise. The memory button doubles for another function, PS (program start) locator—a very valuable addition for tapes recorded on this VCR. During timer programming the reset button functions as cancel.

The unusual controls in the compartment include a switch that gives a choice of standard, "detail" position for sharpness, or an edit position for dubbing. The timer record and programming buttons are also in there—it is much easier to set them from the remote control. A slider control for sharpness complements the switch that provides extra detail.

Because of the large number of functions controllable from the remote, it is not easy to use them all without both reading the manual thoroughly and practicing. That is especially true for setting the timer, though the on-screen prompts do help immensely. Reading the manual is a must to get the best out of this function-laden VCR.

Performance. The VR560HQ delivers 240 lines of horizontal resolution with a video signal-to-noise ratio of 43.3/42.4/41.8 decibels at the SP/LP/EP speeds respectively, unweighted. Weighting improves these S/N figures about 4 dB, and with sag compensation they are 55.7/53.4/47.4 dB, respectively. Chroma AM S/N is 39.9/38.4/36.1 dB, and chroma PM S/N is 39.3/37.3/35.8 dB. Marantz says that its HQ circuitry offers the extended white clip and detail enhancement circuits only.

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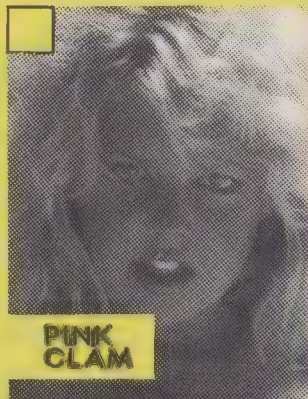
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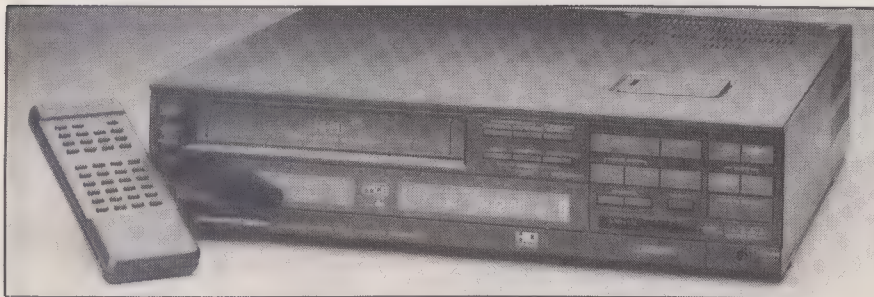
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Marantz's VR560HQ VCR boasts Hi-Fi sound, and HQ circuitry for sharp pictures.

Overall video quality is very good.

On audio the overall performance is very good/excellent, with Hi-Fi frequency response of 20 Hertz to 20,000 Hertz, +0.1/-1.0 dB, worst case. Hi-Fi dynamic range is a measured 76 dB with stereo separation of 61.5 dB, and total harmonic distortion of 0.4 percent. The linear audio is stereo with Dolby NR, which is becoming a rarity. Frequency response is 63 to 12,000 Hertz, +3.8/-3 dB at SP; 63 to 8000 Hertz, +3.7/-3 dB at LP; and 63 to 5000 Hertz, +3.7/-3 dB at EP with a worst case audio S/N of 42 dB and 2.3 percent total harmonic distortion.

Two characteristics of the audio tracks need explanation. When you select SAP recording, SAP/bilingual is recorded on both Hi-Fi and linear right tracks while main audio in mono is recorded on both left tracks. Usually SAP is recorded on only the linear track. Also, the two pairs of audio output jacks offer one pair with fixed level audio and the second with volume adjusted by the controls on the remote, so that you have volume control even with non-Marantz TVs. The LED indicator gives you a rough estimate of how loud output volume is.

Conclusion. The Marantz VR560HQ has some of the most desirable functions available, although you could be greedy and ask for digital effects, too. The picture is very good but could stand improvement, especially on chroma S/N. The audio is very good/excellent with room for a slight improvement on Hi-Fi dynamic range, and the only way to significantly enhance ease of operation is to reduce the number of functions. Overall the VR560HQ is a very good performer.

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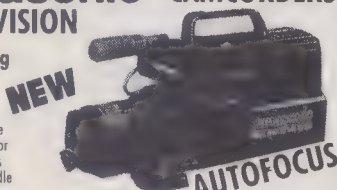
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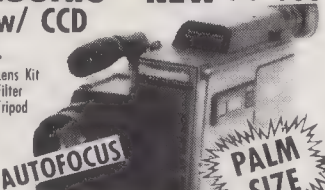
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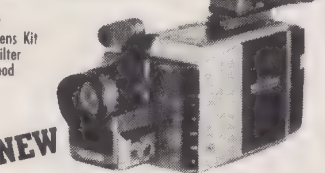
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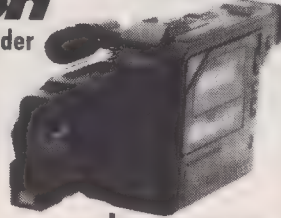
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continued from page 40

aren't often as high. The typical set with a \$400 suggested price may cost about \$310 in a discount store.

VCRs and TVs come and go, and both manufacturers and dealers slash the prices of discontinued models to move them out the door. These can be exceptional buys, as long as the merchandise carries the regular manufacturer's warranty. Never buy a VCR or TV that doesn't have at least a 90

day warranty; repairs can be as high as the original purchase price. Few dealers indicate that a sale model has been discontinued, but if the price is sensationally low, you can bet it is. Ask if you're curious.

The best times to shop for a discontinued model are after Christmas and in the middle of summer. These two buying seasons roughly correspond to the Winter and Summer Consumer Electronics Shows, held in January and June, during which old models are replaced with new ones.

Don't be shy: ask about the least expensive models, as well as those on sale.


Appearing to be a big spender doesn't really impress anyone, and it certainly doesn't guarantee you'll get better merchandise or service. Most sales people are trained to show you a middle-of-the-line model, then watch your reactions to gauge your buying preference and financial stamina. Keep asking for a less expensive model, until you find the one you really like and can afford.

Some dealers actually lose money selling inexpensive VCRs and TVs, but make their profit by pushing expensive service contracts. Not all service contracts are bad deals, but spending \$300 for a VCR, only to tack on another \$100 for a one-year service contract, is no way to hold down costs.

You're better off buying a model from a recognized manufacturer, which offers a reasonable warranty period, and saying "no, thank you" to the service contract option. Statistics show that only a very small percentage of VCRs and TVs fail in their first year or two of use, and it's a rare service contract that extends beyond the first two years of ownership.

Finally, features add cost to both TVs and VCRs. If you shop wisely, you can avoid duplicating features and capabilities in both the TV set and the deck. For example, let's say you always plan to use the tuner in the VCR when receiving off-air channels. That means you can either buy a set without a tuner (monitor only) or settle for a TV with a non-cable ready tuner. If you're hooked up to cable, you can use the VCR to dial in the extra cable channels.

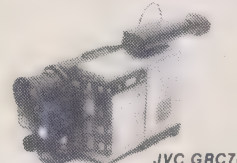
The bottom line is that a good quality video system is now less a luxury than a household appliance comparable in cost to, say, a washer/dryer. Just keep the features you want and the use the system will be getting clearly in mind, and a low-cost, two-component duo can greatly expand your viewing options. ✓



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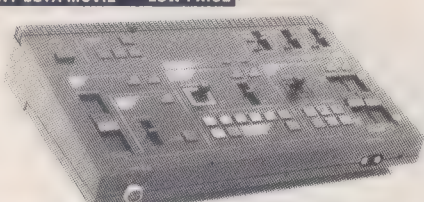
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

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DIGITAL DICTIONARY

continued from page 44

tape to a stop and adjust it for the best tape-to-head contact.

Even though the still frame is a digital image, the tape remains wrapped around the video drum, risking damage to the video heads. To prevent that, the VCR has an automatic circuit that disengages the feature after five minutes, reverting to play or stop.

Frame advance replaces one digital still frame with the next frame. The digital technique eliminates jitter, jerking, and tearing of the image.

Slow motion is essentially a variation on automatic frame advance. Some of the new VCRs offer only one or two slow motion speeds, while others let you adjust the rate from 1/4 to 1/30 speed, and alternate between still frame and slow motion with the remote control.



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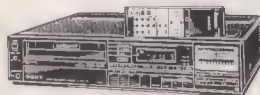
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Fast play is double speed on most machines, with the picture quality improved by digital signal processing. On Toshiba's DX-7 VCR (as well as on its non-digital M-5900) you can even hear the audio. Unfortunately, it's from the linear audio track, not the Hi-Fi track. It produces an unintelligible "Donald Duck" effect. JVC's HR-D570 also has double speed audio but, at press time, we weren't able to determine if it uses the linear audio or the Hi-Fi track.

Mosaic processes a single digital still so its individual pixels are blown up into larger blocks for a sort of checker-board effect. (The effect was recently used in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, in the video pictures of Admiral Kirk that were transmitted to Earth.) You can edit the mosaic onto tape as part of a title sequence, or to segue from one scene to another.

Posterization, also known as the "paintbrush" or "cartoon" effect,

changes and distorts an image's original colors, emphasizing some and deemphasizing others in order to give it a paint-by-numbers look.

Picture-in-picture is perhaps the most useful of the digital features. It displays two different images on the TV screen at the same time. The main image comes from the VCR's tuner, while the inset picture, usually about 1/12 the size of the screen, can be the feed from another VCR, camera, or tuner. The inset can be moved around if it obscures part of the bigger image.

Picture swap switches the signals between the inset and the main screen. If you have a camera monitoring a baby's room, for example, you can leave that image in one corner of the screen while you watch David Letterman on the big screen. You can push a button to get a better look at the kid on the main screen. Since the audio switches as well, you'll be able to hear the baby.

Picture strobe is similar to fixed speed slow motion, with the still frames updated every second or so. On some models, the strobe occupies the entire TV screen. On others, the screen divides into nine small pictures, arranged in a three-by-three display, with each picture continuously changing, one after the other. A feature like this is useful not only as a special effect, but for motion studies. Videotape your golf swing, for example, and study it second by second.

TV still grabs any image coming in from the VCR's tuner, or routed through it from an external source (VCR, camera, LV) and freezes it onscreen. It offers digital still frame capability to any video product that doesn't already have it. For example, most videodiscs pressed today are in the CLV format and don't offer any special effects. But if you route the video signal from a videodisc player (CED or Laser) into a VCR with a TV still feature, you've got a "frame grabbing" capability for both machines. —R.W.

LET'S GET DIGITAL

continued from page 44

DIGITAL'S PROMISE

Most of the features on the current crop of digital-effect VCRs are accomplished with a relatively small amount of computer memory—about 1 Megabit of DRAM, in the form of either nine 256K chips or a single Megabit chip. As more computer memory is added, the range and versatility of the features will increase accordingly. For example, future split-screens could display more than two video sources on a single screen, allowing the visually

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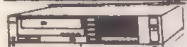
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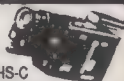
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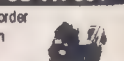
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continued from page 47

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Test signal generators by Tektronics, B&K, Sencore, Technics, and Heathkit, some of which were modified for our needs, were also employed. Other equipment by Beckman, Hewlett Packard, NAD, Pioneer, and others was used in the laboratory and for monitoring. A Polaroid CU-5 was used to make permanent records off oscilloscopes and TV screens.

TEST PROCEDURES

We requested tape samples from manufacturers and bought or swapped samples with dealers to avoid possible ringers. At least three samples of each tape were tested for eight characteristics that should tell you enough about a tape to make an informed choice. We measured video S/N, chroma AM S/N, chroma PM S/N, dropout count, output loss at 2MHz, audio S/N, and audio frequency response.

The dispersion figure was calculated and labelled "consistency between batches." Unfortunately, we could find samples of only one batch for some tapes. Cases where it was not possible to calculate a dispersion figure are indicated by dashes on the chart.

We did not measure audio track balance for Beta tapes because only one Beta machine with stereo linear tracks was ever released in the U.S., a Marantz VR 200 with Dolby C noise reduction. So few were available that, for practical purposes, Beta machines only have mono linear tracks. **V**

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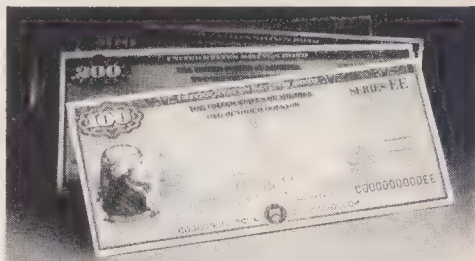
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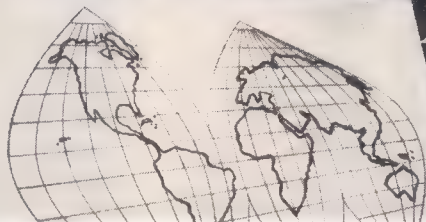
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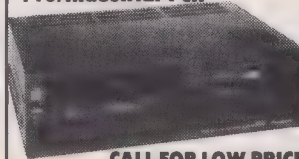
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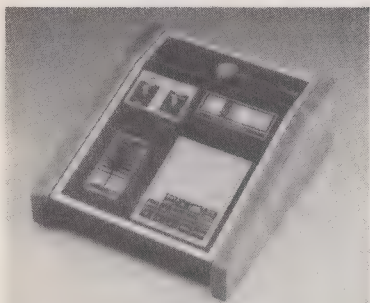
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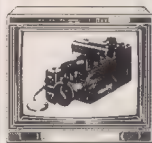
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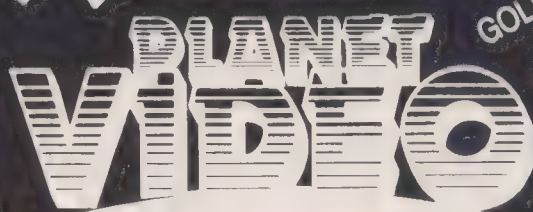
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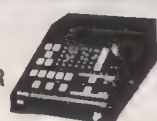
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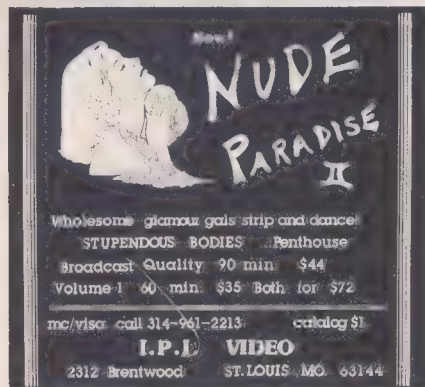
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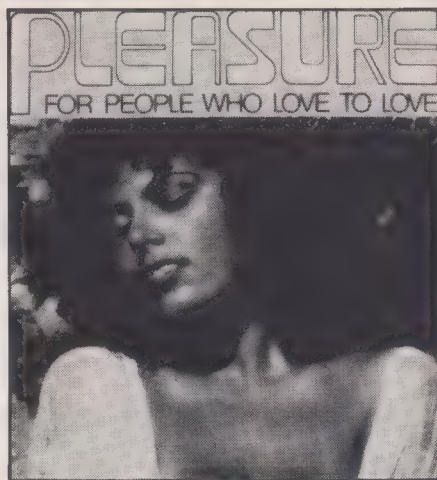
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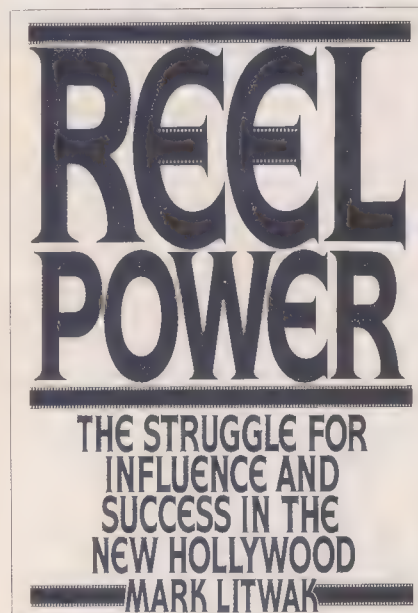
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Video Bookshelf

by Louis
Kesten



Reel Power

by Mark Litwak

Morrow, N.Y., \$18.95.

This is the book that purports to answer the question:

what's wrong with Hollywood? The studios, argues Mark Litwak's *Reel Power*, say producers don't know how to maintain control over their movies. Producers say directors are ego-maniacs who waste time and throw around company money instead of doing things right in the first place. Directors say actors are neurotics who care more about their appearance than their craft. Actors say writers give them sloppy, unfinished scripts. Writers say that even when they can sell a

good script, everyone else mangles it beyond recognition. Agents do their damndest to keep the warfare going, and everyone involved makes truckloads of money.

Meanwhile, we get more movies—and tapes—like *Cobra* and *Howard the Duck*, two recent landmarks of cinematic cynicism and ineptitude. The message of *Reel Power* is that Hollywood is no longer the capital of movie-making, but the capital of deal-making. Success requires more political maneuvering than talent, and movies become increasingly bland as studios try harder to create nothing but mass-consumption blockbusters. Litwak warns that this obsession with money impairs everyone's willingness to take

risks, and jeopardizes the future of Hollywood itself.

His classic case study here is the Sylvester Stallone-Dolly Parton fiasco *Rhinestone*. Apparently, everyone loved Phil Alden Robinson's original script, but Twentieth Century-Fox wouldn't make the movie without two major stars in the lead roles. Through Creative Artists Agency (CAA), the most powerful agency in town, Fox lined up Sly and Dolly. According to Litwak, however, Sly insisted on choosing the director and rewriting the screenplay, making his own role bigger and less vulnerable. Fox protested but let the star have his way. After numerous fights with Stallone, director Don Zimmerman was replaced by *Porky's* director Bob Clark; despite Fox's fears, Stallone's ego was allowed to run unchecked. It cost the studio \$28 million, and *Rhinestone* attracted minuscule audiences and vicious reviews.

It's not just domineering actors who foist bad movies upon the not-so-unsuspecting audience. The power struggles in which everyone engages make filmmaking a competitive rather than cooperative enterprise. Since the demise of the studio system, most films begin as packages created by agents for their clients. Studio executives, instead of developing their own ideas, look for "high concept" projects that have immediate appeal or recall a previous success: *Footloose* was *Flashdance* on a farm, *Outland* was *High Noon* in space. No one wants to invest in innovative projects; Jane Fonda compares the studios to a "herd of turtles."

One might expect more of a struggle between art and commerce, that the creative folks would battle more against the businessmen. But many of the directors, writers, and actors interviewed in *Reel Power* seem to have retreated into cynicism, willing to settle for esthetic compromises in exchange for enormous paychecks. Litwak believes this greed will eventually devour Hollywood and destroy its prominence in the film world. Litwak sees the future of filmmaking in independent producers and directors like Jim Jarmusch and John Sayles. The most encouraging section of *Reel Power* details Henry Jaglom's ability to make movies through sheer pluck and determination, without the financial support—or labyrinthine complications—of the major studios.

Litwak interviewed hundreds of people for this book, and his research gives *Reel Power* a breadth other recent Hollywood exposes have lacked. At the same time, its scope may be its greatest drawback—the flaws and complications of Hollywood are just too numerous to deal with in 300 pages. *Reel Power* has all of Hollywood's factions defending themselves and attacking each other, but not enough case studies. Except for *Rhinestone*, Litwak doesn't give us enough examples of how everyone's ineptitude and greed lead to atrocious movies.

Reel Power may work best as a primer for those who want to break into Hollywood and want to know how to negotiate all its pitfalls. But its bleak message is: don't bother.

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Off the Air

The Last Word

Sell-Thru Success Story

By Bob Brewin

Driven by under \$30, prices, the 1986 Christmas season presented the pre-recorded home video business with its best sales record ever, giving dealers the hope that home video finally is ready to become a market that depends more on sales than rentals. The major studios enticed consumers with packages of classic and more recent movie titles priced from \$19.95 to \$29.95. The results were "phenomenal," according to video dealers.

That's because there were a phenomenal number of "sell-through tapes" (tapes that will primarily sell rather than rent) awaiting all those Christmas shoppers, according to a CBS/Fox survey. CBS/Fox estimated there were 438 sell-through tapes released last November.

Erol's, the largest video chain in the country with its 106 East Coast stores, sold close to 100,000 tapes in the short Christmas season. Erol's spokesman Van Stevenson said the lower prices were the key factor in the company's sales success. But he added that promotion played an important role, too, since you can't sell the tapes unless the customer knows about the bargains. Erol's sank slightly over 1 million into seasonal advertising.

To Van Stevenson, breaking the \$30 barrier was important because it made pre-recorded tapes competitive with other gifts, particularly books. Like books, tapes are ideal gifts because "you don't have to worry about color or size."

Though the Erol's Christmas "Top 25" list was dominated by movie titles (plus, inevitably, Jane Fonda's latest

exercise tapes), the company also had excellent sales with the newest home video category: games. Both *Clue* and *NFL Quarterback* did well enough to outrank even some movies. Despite the negative publicity, colorized classics also fared well in Erol's, with the color version of *It's A Wonderful Life* placing high on its best-seller list.


At the 40-plus store Tower Video chain, low-priced studio packages also proved to be strong Christmas sales draw, with sales "the best ever," according to Joe Medwick, Tower's marketing director. Tower Video also did well with sales in another category that the home video business has almost written off: music videos. And not just mainstream music like the two-title Barbra Streisand package from CBS/Fox. "We're blowing out some pretty hip titles," Medwick said. "For example, we're selling about 100 copies a week of the Cure video."

Smaller stores said their customers responded well to the lower prices. New York City's New Video, which carries many sophisticated and odd-ball titles that don't do well in other outlets, along with hit films, has seen an increased number of buyers. "It used to be if someone came in and wanted the Streisand tape set, you would assume they were a renter," said Steve Savage, New Video co-owner. "Now, they just well might be a buyer." While New Video did well on sales of titles that would be a natural at most locations, such as Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, the company's Greenwich Village outlets also had a strong showing with

Paramount's \$19.95 *Midnight Cowboy*.

As far as Savage is concerned, Christmas 1986, in which New Video "broke all its sales records," marked a dramatic shift towards sales and away from rentals. But he wonders if Hollywood will screw it up. Amid the Christmas sales frenzy CBS/Fox announced sharp price hikes on its A-list tapes, sending a shudder of concern through video stores. In 1987 CBS/Fox will push the price of new releases of hot films from \$79.95 to \$89.98. Savage called this move "short-sighted" on the part of the studios, in that it will hurt small operations that will not be able to buy as many copies to rent to customers.

But that's exactly why CBS/Fox made the move, a company spokesman explained. The industry knows these top titles initially will be skewed towards rental rather than sales, and higher prices allow the company to make slightly more off a film that the dealer then collects all the rental freight on. (Copyright law does not let the studios recoup rental income once a tape has been sold.) The spokesman claimed that CBS/Fox kicked off the sales boom when it issued its first "Five Star" collection at \$29.98 last August.

Apparently, the strategy works well. "The first Five Star collection sold 1.8 million units and the second sold over 2 million," he said. "But this has created pressures on our markets. We are increasing the prices on the A titles to improve our bottom line, and those higher prices will be on just six tapes we release in all of 1987." 



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